

Book Reviews

Parsons, David, and Sutherland, D. S., *The Anglo-Saxon Church of All Saints, Brixworth, Northamptonshire. Survey, excavation and analysis 1972-2010*, Oxford and Oakville, Oxbow Books (2013), 326 pp., 152 ills, 5 fold-outs. £90. ISBN 978-1-84217-531-6.

This book has been much anticipated. Since Michel Audouy's 1981-2 excavations,¹ Sir Alfred Clapham's 1930 assertion, 'perhaps the most imposing architectural memorial of the 7th century yet surviving north of the Alps', has had to be modified as far as Brixworth's date is concerned. The combined evidence of these studies strongly suggests this is a building of the late 8th century with the west tower and east end remodelled before the end of the 9th century.

It remains an imposing church and is a key building to understanding the architecture of the powerful Mercian kingdom, if not of England, around 800. Nowhere else can we experience a standing building of this scale in Britain, though we know from excavated evidence that it represents the scale of contemporary cathedrals and major abbey churches. The nave is 18 metres long by 9 metres wide (59ft by 29ft 6in.), a huge space comparable to the cathedrals at Canterbury (22m by 10.5m, 72ft by 34ft 6in.) and Winchester (21m by 9m, 69ft by 29ft 6in.) and larger than Glastonbury Abbey church (17m by 6.5, 55ft 9in. by 21ft) – though all these comparable dimensions are approximate as they are derived from foundation evidence. Little is known of Medeshamstede (Peterborough) Abbey from which Brixworth may have been founded, but the north 'transept' or porticus under the existing cathedral is also 9 metres (29ft 6in.) wide. The actual height of Anglo-Saxon Brixworth is not certainly known as the upper nave walls have been rebuilt – the present crenellated parapet is late medieval in origin – but it is not far short of the width, so making the nave a double cube, which cannot be accidental.

As far as we know these other great churches were not built of re-cycled Roman material – much now conclusively located to Leicester – and this has given Brixworth an extra historical interest in that it raises many questions about intentions and practicalities; why were Roman buildings imitated and just how did the material get here? Why transport it overland up to 40 km (25 miles) when there was so much local building stone available – especially as the rubble was rendered and limewashed?

These and many other issues have been addressed in this multi-disciplinary volume.

It reflects the make-up of the Brixworth Archaeological Research Committee (BARC), inaugurated by the then vicar in 1972 and chaired until 2009 by Rosemary Cramp (now BARC President). David Parsons has also been involved with the project from the beginning, initially as the co-ordinator of research into the standing structure, but more recently as the leader of a small team that includes the indefatigable Diana Sutherland. Her many hours on the scaffold identifying each stone and brick by its petrology and geology has supplied crucial evidence on both the sources of the material and the relative chronology of its incorporation in the fabric. Ashlar and single material rubble (such as flint) is obviously much easier to interpret and so such an intensive study has not been carried out elsewhere. The rather beautiful multi-coloured diagrams that result amply show what evidence can be retrieved from looking hard at a rubble wall and they are a lesson to us all.

The text is in two parts: 'Presentation of the evidence' is the larger at 145 pages (with another 70 pages of Appendices), but the ninety page second part, 'Analysis and synthesis', finishes with a six page section, 'Research outcomes and future investigations', succinctly outlining just how much more work is needed. Part I begins with a short history of BARC's activities (see below) and a brief general description, admirably without the modern condemning gloss that so frequently accompanies any account of the restoration activities of the Victorian vicar here. Then follows an exhaustive study of the antiquarian sources, reproducing all the main drawings and descriptions. This in itself is an object lesson in understanding the record making activities of our predecessors, as detailed comparison of these drawings and texts poses almost as many questions as they answer.

Section 5 launches into the methods and procedures adopted for the fabric survey, mainly conducted by Parsons and Sutherland. The length of time since much of this work was done (around the mid-1970s) gives this study an almost antiquarian character, as those methods did not include the electronic and laser techniques available today. Parsons defends manual record against photogrammetry as it enables individual stones to be accurately outlined and small but significant details (such as adhering mortar on re-used stone) to be seen and recorded. (Much the same point is made by Warwick Rodwell in the latest edition of *The Archaeology of Churches*, and he has great experience of both techniques).² Diana Sutherland's section 6,

'The Building Materials' is the vital chapter, as it provides the raw evidence for not just the materials but their chronological use. Section 7, 'Description, Analysis and Structural Evidence', then synthesises all the material already presented. Inevitably it is a dense read but well written, though marred by some inaccurate annotations of heights in some figures. Fold out figs. 7.21 and 7.24 mistakenly give the mid-wall height as 10m, whereas the scale on both drawings and other figures give the correct height of 5m.

Section 8 on the archaeological investigations since *c.* 1950 includes the inelegantly titled 'artefactual evidence'. Here are the first of a number of expert reports; on the all important pottery that fixes the date of the first build to the late 7th century, geophysics (which as ever promises much) and then comes Rosemary Cramp on the carved stone. 'Considering the amount of reconstruction of the fabric of this important church...it is surprising how little sculpture has been discovered' – and she might have added how 'disappointing' too. The famous eagle cross head, once ignominiously tucked behind glass in the old draught lobby, is now better displayed and Cramp convincingly argues for its iconography indicating an important ecclesiastical site. Part I ends with a succinct summary of the dating evidence. The demolition of the porticus (separate chambers that lined the nave) remains enigmatic and I found the arguments surrounding the insertion of the present *c.* 1200 south door confusing. What needs to be explained is how the church was ceremonially entered, particularly by dignitaries, after the original west porch door was displaced by the stout spiral staircase, most probably in the middle decades of the 9th century. Was it by a predecessor of the present south door? If so, then why was that door, presumably of a decent size, displaced? Or are we missing a door in an outer wall of the south porticus that remain to be excavated? A central southern entrance could have existed, as apparently at the demolished Wareham St Mary (fig. 12.2), a parallel given for Brixworth in section 12b.

Part II begins with another tour-de-force from Diana Sutherland, the 'Significance of the Building Stones'; her observations putting the stones and bricks used at Brixworth into context will be useful to the interpretation of other fabrics, as well as being an exemplar. The following section interprets the fabric and again demonstrates the value of a stone-by-stone analysis. The reconstruction drawings are particularly useful in understanding the

implications of the discoveries, not least the possible variants of the western forebuilding. Although a slightly circular argument, this puts Brixworth clearly into its Carolingian context and, for today's visitor, makes sense of the successive openings in the west nave wall. Like David Hare at Deerhurst, Parsons explains the use of wooden galleries and staircases to these complex western spaces which we are so unaccustomed to see in English architecture. But why were these apparently useful spaces taken away in favour of a west tower? Presumably because of a change in function or status, which putative reconstructions are unlikely to reveal.

Section 12, 'The Anglo-Saxon church in its insular and continental setting', is the academic heart of the book. Divided into four sections (which really need to be read at one sitting, as they are such interrelated aspects of the same story), it covers the archaeological and architectural context by the BARC team. Another long standing BARC member Richard Gem discusses the liturgical context and a more recent recruit, Paul Barnwell, re-assesses the documentary and textual evidence. This finally dismisses the 675 date, though retaining the link to Medeshamstede. Barnwell extracts a great deal of indirect evidence from things like the place name and parish boundaries to suggest that Brixworth is one of Offa's creations in the 780s, though even he finds it tough to find a context for the late 9th century Phase II amendments or the demolition of the porticus. Basically, we still don't know why such a grand church is at Brixworth.

It might be the shortest, but section 13 is very important in establishing the results so far and setting out future research directions based on the last four decades of work 'that have been both illuminating and inconclusive'. Little is said of the manner in which this very wide building was roofed, beyond noting the line of the steeply pitched roof of the nave against the west tower. Given recent studies of big 10th and 11th century roof structures e.g. William II's Westminster Hall, I wonder if the vertical posts against the east nave wall just visible in William Bartlett's pre-1854 restoration interior view (fig. 4.6) are the remains of an early medieval roof. They have little bases which surely rules out a post-medieval date. They are long gone, as is the curious lump of masonry visible in the south east corner of the chancel in the same drawing and apparently recorded on Slater's pre-restoration plan of 1863; was it a rood stair?

No future vicar, PCC or church architect can be in any doubt about the need for archaeological

investigation when any repairs or changes are proposed to the sensitive areas identified, including the vicarage and its garden. But how might such work be arranged in this century? The statutory authorities and professionals involved in church work are better aware of the need for archaeological research than in the 1970s, but this is at a time when the State funding that paid for some of BARC's work is shrinking. The Heritage Lottery Fund will insist on full pre-works assessments and will be prepared to include such essential costs in any grant they offer for repairs (or even for some changes like underfloor heating). Any non-grant aided work will need to be funded by the parish, which would bring us back to the bad old days (six trusts have supported this publication). The long-term organisation and integration of such efforts, handled so well by BARC volunteers over the last forty years is also less certain, unless an academic institution can be attracted to the project. It is true that in this digital age dissemination of information is much easier, so compiling a book like this (or the comparable excellent volumes on the contemporary work by Warwick Rodwell at Barton-on-Humber, Lincs.) may not be as necessary in future.

This book is a splendid achievement matching the quality of the decades of work it describes and the authors are to be congratulated. They have been well served by their publishers too, with many colour drawings, fold outs and few typos. Some of the photographs might have been better focussed (e.g. fig.12.7) but there are ample illustrations throughout; the £90 cost might seem high, but is good value in comparison to similar publications. And its like might not be seen again.

RICHARD HALSEY

NOTES

- 1 M. Audouy, 'Excavations at the church of All Saints' Brixworth, Northamptonshire 1981-2', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 137 (1984) 1-44.
- 2 Warwick Rodwell, *The Archaeology of Churches* (Stroud, 2012), 207-12.

Howe, Emily, Henrietta McBurney, David Park, Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede, *Wall Paintings of Eton*, London: Scala (2012), 192 pp., numerous ills, £35. ISBN 978-1-85759-787-5.

The late 15th-century cycle of paintings depicting the *Miracles of the Virgin* in Eton College chapel are well known to scholars, if not to the general public. Unknown to the modern world before 2002, and not widely publicized until now, is the wall-painting dated c. 1520 in the Headmaster's Chamber at Eton, showing a delightful scene of a schoolmaster instructing his lively, wayward pupils. Both the *Miracles* and the *School* scene have suffered severe damage from different causes; the *Miracles* have been studied over many years and conserved more than once. The discovery of the *School* scene and the recent conservation of both paintings offered a chance for further study, informed by the new evidence that emerged from that work. The account of the repair and technical examination are enough in themselves to justify the publication of this book; but the authors' discussion of their historical, stylistic and iconographic contexts provides a thorough appraisal that brings the paintings to a central place in the problematic history of art in England at the time. The whole amounts to an exemplary work of scholarship, in which the authors and Eton College can take pride.

The book is in two parts. In Part I Emily Howe discusses the *Miracles* cycle in the chapel, and includes a catalogue of all the surviving paintings and the drawings made in 1847 of what was left of the upper register after it had been partly scraped off. A technical summary of the paint analysis appears as an Appendix after the shorter Part II, in which the other four authors present the *School* scene. Every painting is beautifully illustrated, as are the comparanda. There is a plan of the college buildings, and a table numbering and identifying the sequence of miracles and the saints who stand between the scenes. This is necessary as well as helpful, since Howe has modified some of the identifications made by M. R. James, whose full account, published in 1907, has up to now been the main source of information. Helpfulness is indeed a notable characteristic of the book: the catalogue illustrations, which often show parts of other scenes and more than one saint, have titles inset over all, to keep you on track; and the footnotes, as well as complementing aspects of the main text – they repay attention – are genuine footnotes, at the bottom of the relevant page. You require a bookmarker for the

bibliography at the end of the book, but no extra fingers are needed for the references.

For the *Miracle* paintings, Howe has had to take on a formidable body of past scholarship, by M. R. James and Andrew Martindale in particular, and such conservators as E. W. Tristram and Pauline Plummer. The latter emerges as the heroine of the book: she did much to make sense of the paintings and rescue them from the mistakes of her well-meaning predecessors. Howe negotiates the historiography with great skill, backed by more recent research, not least her own. The latest examination has solved some problems but not all, though earlier scholars would be relieved that some of their conjectures have been borne out by the new technology. Earlier scholars would not, however, have referred (p.35) to a 'homogenous' group of saints where 'homogeneous' is the word sought.

The paintings are in fact accidental, never intended by Henry VI, who planned a massive aisled nave for his chapel. It was only when the building contracted to a single cell and Henry was dead that William Waynefflete, bishop of Winchester, effectively took charge of the project. Waynefflete is the person most likely to have commissioned the two registers of paintings to cover the expanse of bare wall in the new nave. The chosen themes were close to Waynefflete's intellectual interests and to the devotional focus of both the bishop and the late king. It is not for want of archival research that the dates and attribution are still uncertain. As a private commission, the work did not go through the books at Eton until the college took it over after Waynefflete's death. The same, a generation or two later, seems to have been true of the *School* scene: another private commission for which the college did not pay.

Technical examination confirms the long-held theory of two sets of painters for the *Miracles* and adds a third. That the style is Anglo-Flemish is not in doubt; an exact source remains elusive, which, given the mobility and adaptability of contemporary painters, is more plausible than otherwise. What is also not in doubt is the quality of the paintings: grisaille, oil-based and modeled with highlights, flesh tones and some details picked out in glowing colour, they must have looked spectacular, and they still look pretty good despite their later history.

The *School* scene was found behind some 18th-century panelling in the Headmaster's Chamber in School Yard. Again, the authors provide a fascinating analysis of the style, the context, parallels and sources. There are other contemporary school

scenes, but none quite like this. As with the *Miracles* there is a close connection to Winchester, this time because the textual source was the work of William Horman, who had taught at both colleges and was a Fellow of Eton. The painting technique is different from the chapel scenes, as is the informal, anecdotal liveliness. This last seems to this reviewer to reflect a significant tone of narrative representation that can be traced in English painting back at least to the 12th century: a strand of high spirits, expressed with neat economy, that has popped out every now and then and survives today in newspaper pocket cartoons. A nice touch, pointed out and illustrated, is that three Tudor benches of the type shown in the painting are in use at Eton today.

Even though the paintings survived against all the odds, they have at least survived. It is a safe bet that there are more fragments of this kind waiting to be found in other buildings. Medieval studies are not popular nowadays, but we must hope that, when more paintings are discovered, the money will be found to do the kind of work that is published in this book and that a group of scholars of the calibre on show here will be around to do it.

NICOLA COLDSTREAM

Alcock, Nat. and Miles, Dan, *The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England*, Oxfordshire, England, and Oakville, USA: Oxbow Books and David Brown Book Co. (2013), 326 pp., 165 ills, £35. ISBN 978-1-84217-506-4.

The book is in two main parts and has a CD in a rear pocket giving concise but very readable archaeological reports. Part 1 (chapters 1-7) deals with the analysis of the medieval peasant house, with considerable emphasis on the word 'peasant'. Part 2 contains examples of medieval peasant houses, each of which is given a unique reference which is directly allied to the text for the analysis. Seventeen buildings are illustrated on the CD utilising a wide range of techniques for analysis and a selection of twenty-one shorter reports giving only brief details from Part 2. The distinction is not fully explained, but may be due to the need to gain rather more extensive data for carpentry techniques than the rather more generalised documentary research. The book has a number of other contributors, including Chris Dyer, Christopher Currie, Bob

Laxton and Cliff Lytton. Each has contributed their own research projects to the body of data being analysed.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) explains that the book provides an in-depth study of surviving peasant houses and their historical context, without an overriding examination of tenurial distinction. This was to be regarded as less important than the nature of other resources available, despite the fact that it surely determines who could amass land and hence surplus wealth to plough back into rebuilding programmes. In addition it is clear that the documentary sources did concentrate on this aspect. The Introduction makes a concerted attempt to identify what constitutes a peasant householder in late medieval English society, whether an emerging yeoman farmer or of more modest status. The issue continues to arise, together with the origin of these houses, and whether the text manages to unravel these joint mysteries completely is a matter of debate, although it certainly provides a body of evidence, analysed in minute detail to determine their characteristics. However, the combination used of tree-ring dating, radiocarbon dating, detailed archaeological study of structure, and documentary research proves to be a powerful tool, leading to a comprehensive understanding of planning, structure and carpentry from the 13th to the 16th centuries. Excavation is dismissed as being of limited value in the Introduction, but is later used to explain such phenomenon as the grouping of farm buildings around a courtyard in 14th and 15th centuries.

A case is made for medieval houses in the Midlands having less detail than those belonging to a wealthier sub-class in Kent and East Anglia, and being dominated by cruck construction, the earliest form of which is the base cruck. Alternatively they utilised aisled construction, often in association with a central base cruck, although box framing was not unknown. These houses were identified with the whole hierarchy of rural society from substantial landholder to the smallholder possessing three acres.

The project area (sampling strategy) was based on a concentration of cruck houses that were overtly medieval, in Warwickshire, Leicestershire, South Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, with no convincing explanation of this choice, including a somewhat peculiar definition of these counties as the Midlands. One is surprised to find that crucks adjacent to the River Severn and the border counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and

Worcestershire, were not to be included because they were deemed to be too elegant and thus not the houses of typical peasants. This is surely begging the question and unconvincing, given the great wealth of cruck distribution evidenced in Alcock's own distribution map (p.8) which gives a total of 3086. The sampling strategy then concentrates on county lists of cruck houses and the best villages containing these. Choosing complete houses was acknowledged to have a sampling bias, thought to be eliminated by concentrating on 'cruck villages' such as Long Crendon (Bucks.), the main objective being good dendro-dating. Exceptions use data from Nottinghamshire on base crucks (indicating interestingly that they were built for superior peasants), once again introducing bias into the sampling strategy.

Chapter 2 studies sampling and dating of the surveyed houses, delving further into the mysteries of sampling and admitting that some bias exists because of the lack of surveyed buildings in central Oxfordshire and North Buckinghamshire, as they lack strategic villages. The intricacies of tree-ring dating and radiocarbon dating are discussed. The text displays the common problem of discussing development of buildings in an early chapter before illustrating their development through documentary evidence.

Chapter 3 examines planning and emphasises how the relationship between planning and structure is fundamental. Of primary interest is the discussion of rooms and their use. The long suspected detached chamber blocks (cross-wings) are brought to the fore in discussion and it is stated that they were 'constructed before the mid-fourteenth century and an early innovation, some even pre-dating now vanished halls'. Numerous diagrams of plans add to the elucidation of this important aspect. Another interesting revelation is that 'houses that had smoke louvers often had these in an end bay indicating perhaps the location of a kitchen here (main cooking hearth) in addition to an open hearth in the central bay'. Whilst only one of these may have been used for cooking, this surely demands further archaeological investigation, a fact not mentioned in the text. The remainder of this chapter discusses aisled halls and base crucks. These houses - 'higher social status, possibly manorial houses, and certainly prestigious with upper end wings' - are seemingly outside the remit of the book title, although it was found necessary to include them. This illustrates the difficulty of staying within the remit of the peasant house and casting some

doubt on the validity of the term 'peasant house' as a medieval building category.

Chapter 4 aims to give a structural overview of Midland peasant houses, taking account of variations in place, time and status, and follows the sequence previously established of crucks, box framing, hybrids, and finally aisled halls and base crucks. The formula introduces structure and academic rigour with which the book abounds, but there is a consistent problem of overlap with data in other chapters. There then follows a detailed discussion of individual buildings which is too convoluted to allow a broad conclusion to be drawn. Again the spectre of bias due to uneven survival raises its head and is a constant concern to the reader. Multiple pages of cross-section drawings allow useful comparison with other sites.

Chapter 5 deals with carpentry details in cruck houses. It draws parallels from other cruck zones, notably the carpentry of the cruck trusses themselves, longitudinal timbers, wall framing, windows and doors, roof timbers and smoke louvers. Again the pattern of examining aisled halls, base crucks and box-framed houses appertains, together with examination of the timber conversion technique. The discussion highlights how variable each area is and how difficult it is to generalise, despite such an in-depth study. It is clear at this point that there is difficulty with separating out structure from planning or structure from carpentry. Aisled halls, base crucks and box frames are again discussed in that order. The base cruck truss discussion overlaps that already given (p.102) and reference to the diagrams already provided. Dragon ties are not explained to the uninitiated apart from supporting the hipped roof rafter, and numerous other technical words reinforce the need for a glossary. There is mention of unjowelled posts pre-1300, but no explanation of how the tie beam sits within the top of the post, which is frustrating for this early and important aspect.

Chapter 6 addresses documentary sources and is perhaps the most useful and enlightening. It makes the term 'peasant house' all the more credible in a social and economic context, and in a countryside of lower ranks of people with limited resources. The introductory essay by Chris Dyer is all encompassing and informative. The term peasant, he says, 'covers a multitude of other terms, villein, husbandmen, yeoman – the latter being only sections of rural society', eliminating the modern view that the term is associated with the poorer elements of farming society. The text is awash with useful facts. The word

'farmer', it is explained, 'implies a large holding of 100 acres whereas peasant farms had around 30 acres before 1350, but greater than 70 acres between 1380 and 1540'. Dyer states that 'the origins of such holdings is thought to be the highland longhouse (animals and people under one roof) which developed into buildings in line or in a yard, and this emerged by the end of the Middle Ages', a type of vernacular threshold analogous to that of the mid-16th to late 17th century. This is quite a startling statement as the origin of the courtyard is not generally understood, although he later quotes archaeological excavation as the main evidence, showing 'farm buildings around a yard with the activities of barn, byre and sheeppcote interacting with the bake house in the dwelling'. The discussion as a whole highlights how difficult it is to have a concept of the different farming classes in the Middle Ages.

Regarding the vexed question of who built the houses or who supplied the materials, it is stated that 'after 1350 (post first Black Death) lords encouraged tenants to rebuild and repair by offering to supply the timber or the peasants bought timber when the lord offered to pay for it'. This implies that they arranged their own building work, importing timber from afar when it was scarce. The question of carriage and difficult roads does not seem to arise here in the minds of the authors, thus baffling the true meaning of the word 'vernacular', whereby locally sourced heavy materials would normally be used. Dyer does not rely heavily on the evidence of the Black Death, preferring to quote instead 'a recession in 1375 and 1440-1480 with low grain prices and reduced rents in order to keep tenants', but logic dictates that there must have been a connection.

Chapter 6 would have been more cohesive if it did not consist of separate essays – a general one by Dyer and location based essays for various areas and by various authors. A chapter which had been totally compiled by Dyer based on the evidence provided by the other authors and their areas would have been much more informative. Instead, one has to read and absorb documentary findings from a number of different study areas and relate it to Dyer's findings to ascertain that they do corroborate his conclusions. The analysis presented is accompanied by beautifully illustrated maps. A lengthy exposition is included, the end result of which is that tracing the descent of individual houses proves to be very difficult; all too complex despite a laudable analysis of all available documentary sources.

Chapter 7 brings together the conclusions of the study, examining issues such as dating, survival, status, plan development and attempts to justify the term 'peasant house'.

In conclusion this is a scholarly and excellently produced volume with a wealth of illustrative material, adding considerably to the state of knowledge on cruck houses, but it would have been enhanced by detailed photography and a glossary. The analysis is detailed but the conclusions are sometimes speculative. There is a morass of data which the authors have managed in a masterly fashion most of the time, but there is some overlap between chapters and a need to have considered the documentary perspective first. Both authors and their contributors are eminently experienced in their respective fields and illustrate a scholarly approach to the study, but it is clear that there are still many unanswered questions. The book will certainly stimulate further research.

CAROLE RYAN

Gray, Todd, *Devon's Ancient Bench Ends*, Exeter: The Mint Press (2012), 192 pp., 304 ills, £17.99. ISBN 978-1-903356-61-6.

Devon is well known for the survival and distinctiveness of its ancient church pews. This reflects the county's historically remote geographical position far from the nation's capital. Also there was its politically important proximity to Brittany, with access as well to the north and west coasts of France and Spain, the latter enjoying a rapid rise in wealth in the 15th and 16th centuries. Parochial benching is more than ever a hot topic just now. Indeed, the author complains that, whereas 'in some Devon churches the seating is much-loved and carefully looked after, in others there is an indifference and apathy, which does not bode well for their future survival'. A book that presents and discusses this county's comparatively numerous legacy of 2,500 benches, in nearly a third of its churches, is to be welcomed.

The introduction sets the scene for the inception of benches in most Devon parish churches, from the late 15th century and later through subsequent vigorous re-orderings and, finally, into the early 20th century. The earliest benches were coeval with a widespread campaign of church rebuilding in the Perpendicular style throughout

the 15th century. The book is divided into three sections, dealing with *The History of Seating*, *The Importance of the Right Seat*, and *The Benches*. This large-scale paperback volume aspires to resemble an 'art' book, on account of its generous size and spacious layout, as well as its immaculate digital photographs, taken by the author. Unfortunately this close attention to the presentation of the book production was not supported by the employment of a vigilant copy editor, to catch any missing words in the text and typographical errors. Perhaps more seriously, the figure captions are mostly limited to the identification of location and are not numbered. Given that much of this little-known material is being exposed for the first time, this makes the process of cross-referencing time-consuming and, often, frustrating. The endnote paginations are often inaccurate, and the lack of a bibliography is another unfortunate shortcoming. After only a few days of use, the Perfect Binding at the front and back of the reviewer's copy had begun to fail.

The availability of a comprehensive book on Devon benches with a generous supply of good quality photographs will probably introduce the subject to ecclesiologists for the first time. However, it is made clear from the outset that Devon possesses very few surviving churchwardens' accounts before 1500, although there is sometimes a chance entry for the payment of new seating, such as that, by a certain John Peirs, as early as 1438 at Dartmouth. In the 16th century there are a few parish records that mention the all too evident fact that funds, as they became available, were frequently expended on *ad hoc* campaigns over a long period of time. This procedure explains the appearance on the benches of more than one style within a single church. This book is outstanding for its provision of a generous number of assorted images for the study of its material. We learn that most, if not all, of the benches were manufactured by local jobbing carvers and carpenters. Only a few can be identified, from their style or a carpenter's mark, as having migrated from any great distance. In nearly all cases, the benches would have been assembled from prepared components on site. There is a useful discussion of high-status family pews of the Jacobean period and for the period 1600 to the early 19th century, particularly that of the Bluett family at Holcombe Rogus; and also of the gradual introduction of the box pew, within which most of the former benches were incarcerated. From the early 19th century, with the progressive rescuing of the bench from this secondary enclosure, there followed a

gradual 'renaissance' of interest in the form, led by such gifted craftsmen as Charles Pickard of Barnstaple, John Mason of Exeter, and doubtless many more. From the late 1860s, the impact of the illustrious carver and business man, Harry Hems, is ubiquitous. Later, in the 1890s, came the respected Pinwill sisters, active until the mid-1950s, and Herbert Read, whose successful business was continued by his descendants until the 1970s.

The short sections entitled 'Seats and the Social Order' and 'Disputes' will complement the burgeoning bibliography on pews and the social hierarchy.¹ The sheer quantity of material tackled in the second half of the book (pp.111-81), which attempts to illustrate and analyse the treasury of ornament and iconography exemplified on Devon's benches, would have posed a considerable challenge to present in relatively condensed form. The variety and ingenuity of the applied carved ornament, both figural and vegetal, coupled with the unique range of religious symbolism is invigorating, even provocative, in its unabashed naivety. More than usually, we find ourselves peering into a self-confident, but irredeemably lost, culture. In his introduction to *The Buildings of England* for Cornwall, Nikolaus Pevsner described the county's decorated slate headstones as *Volkskunst*.² It is perhaps a pity that, regarding the figural illustrations on the Devon bench-ends, Gray chose to use the term 'Village art', rather than 'Folk art', since Pevsner was clearly on to something quite special in both counties. Gray prominently illustrates the 'man riding backward' at Abbotsham, without recording that this *Skimmington Ride* image is a superb example of folk culture.³ On the basis of many of the book illustrations, it is likely that there will be more of this genre, such as the carvings at East Budleigh (p.12). With regard to the *Charivari* image, the author mentioned a Christian interpretation which 'has been suggested', but failed to identify it. In his discussion of the design of the bench-ends and their sculptural content up to c. 1800, it is all too clear, and understandable, that the sheer quantity of undocumented material involved might have been overwhelming. Inevitably, most of the literature on this subject is from the 19th and early 20th centuries. In some cases, there may have been a valid reason to quote a particular early source, but it is not helpful to leave the reader with the impression that these authorities are endorsed uncritically. When he discusses Renaissance monsters, neither does he cite *comparanda* from other media or probe their meaning; in presenting the 'Romaine' heads,

he misses the opportunity to compare them with those in the several secular Devon room panelling schemes, or perhaps, attempt to track them back to their printed Italian sources. In short, an uncritical narrative style in this section tends to undermine this writer's evident strengths. To have attempted to create a wider conspectus, from which to make his judgements, would have provided a welcome element of critical objectivity.

Towards the end of the book, however, persistence is rewarded in the section, 'Religious images', which discusses the astonishing plethora of Catholic iconography appearing on bench-ends from the end of the 15th century in twenty-three Devon churches. Because of the heavy losses in the rest of England, the importance of this disparate, but, until now, essentially hidden *corpus* of specifically Passion imagery is of national significance. As well as those of Marian and Apostolic character, the author presents a generous sample of Passion subject matter, unrivalled anywhere else in Britain. In his analysis, what is particularly telling is the juxtaposition of the geographical distribution of the material in the light of the turbulent contemporary historical record of power and influence in church matters in the county following the Reformation. By 1549, the final defeat of the Catholic rebels left most of south Devon securely under royal control, and it is no coincidence that today very little Catholic imagery survives in this area. The popular late medieval public and private devotional imagery focussing on the Passion of Christ is virtually confined to the formerly remote areas in the north and west of the county. It seems as if the uplands of Exmoor and Dartmoor acted as a natural barrier providing a degree of safety for disaffected closet Catholics. The author's county map indicating all the churches with benches displaying the instruments of the Passion is telling. These peripheral churches must have been protected by conservative patrons, such as Sir Richard Grenville, d.1591. Gray explains that, at the churches of Kilkhampton and Monkleigh in the far north, there are significant collections of religious carvings. The former was the location of the Grenville family mansion, the latter the home of Richard's father-in-law. By contrast South Devon, which was directly under the surveillance of the episcopate, and most of Somerset, were disencumbered of their Catholic material from an early date. Cornwall still contains a wide range of Passion imagery on its bench-ends. This account of a unique collection of Catholic carvings is the more authoritative, thanks to a close study of the recent

historical literature dealing with, in particular, the impact of the Reformation on the English parish church, and the tragic outcome of the Western Rebellion.⁴

By now the author has decisively hit his stride, and the book concludes with a fascinating account of the decorative use of the iron punch, which woodwork *aficionados* will find riveting. In spite of its shortcomings, this book is a ground-breaking and valuable record of a unique body of British medieval, and later, church furniture production. Moreover, it invites the possibility of further research on this multivalent topic, opening up any number of different approaches.

CHARLES TRACY

NOTES

- 1 See the contributions by Marsh, Kelly, Webster, Cooper, Branfoot, and Bettley, in T. Cooper and S. Brown (eds), *Pews, Benches and Chairs* (Ecclesiological Society 2011), 131-332.
- 2 N. Pevsner, *Cornwall*, *The Buildings of England* (Harmondsworth 1970), 22, Fig.44a.
- 3 M. Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages* (Stroud 2002), 97-99.
- 4 The sources cited include E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath* (New Haven and London 2001); R. Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: popular religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge 1989) and *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge 2010).

Keay, Anna and Watkins, John (eds), *The Elizabethan Garden at Kenilworth Castle*, Swindon: English Heritage (2013), 212 pp., approx 160 ills, £40; ISBN 978-1-848020344.

The restoration of the Elizabethan gardens at Kenilworth by English Heritage that opened in 2009 has received a great deal of publicity, not least from a fly-on-the-wall documentary by BBC television. This generously produced volume sets out the scholarly understanding that has underpinned this project and attempts to document for a scholarly audience the process of creating the new garden.

For a specialist publication the quality of its production is extraordinary: beautiful plans and colour photos abound throughout the book. The format is broadly that of the *English Heritage Historical*

Review. Only the cover, with its institutional branding and lack-lustre photograph of the garden, lets down the presentation of the book. It should additionally be said that – quite incredibly given the subject of the study – there is no detailed diagrammatic representation or adequate photographic overview of the garden at Kenilworth as it has actually been re-created. Indeed, the only illustration of the whole is an introductory aerial picture of the castle on page x, in which the whole garden appears at about the size of a small postage stamp.

The volume is a collaborative work of considerable ambition involving no fewer than thirteen contributors. It comprises seventeen chapters or essays, several of them multi-authored, divided into three sections. In the first section are a series of six essays that set the garden at Kenilworth in historical context with considerations of its patron, the earl of Leicester, his patronage and his development of the castle. The second section – which at 26 pages is by far the shortest in the book – considers the evidence for the form of the original garden: documentary, archaeological and pictorial. Finally, there are a group of seven chapters that deal with the realisation of the project. This last section includes an explanation of the philosophy behind the reconstruction, as well as detailed accounts of the planting and the design of the new aviary and fountain. At the conclusion are three appendices, of which the first provides transcriptions of a series of relevant historic documents including an excerpt from Robert Langham's celebrated letter of 1575 (from a forthcoming new edition of the text by Elizabeth Goldring, one of the contributors).

The authors of the various essays are authorities in their field and there is much to learn from this volume for anyone with a serious interest either in Elizabethan gardens or in what English Heritage has achieved in their recent work at Kenilworth. Particularly valuable to my mind are the essays in the first section of the book, which add materially to our understanding of the development of the castle and its importance to the earl of Leicester. The accounts of recreating the fountain and the aviary are also object lessons in work of this kind and can surely help inform future projects. If there had been interest in making the volume longer it would have been interesting to hear how the team involved saw their own work in relation to other historic garden reconstructions. To have so much attention focussed on the 1575 garden also makes apparent the degree to which the castle and its history as a whole still await proper analysis.

Reading the text it is hard to escape from the fact that the garden reconstruction has been informed less by new material than by fresh thinking about familiar evidence. Clearly, there was the early hope that archaeological investigation in particular would yield important new insights into the plan and planting of the garden. In the event it revealed the location of its fountain (and some sections of the watercourse that fed it), but almost nothing besides. Consequently the real basis for the whole enterprise remains Langham's letter of 1575, a text first brought to popular attention by Walter Scott in his novel *Kenilworth* (1821). As this volume makes apparent, the letter is a complex document to interpret. It is also silent, ambiguous or unclear on many points.

The essays in the volume repeatedly explain how the skeleton of Langham's description can be plausibly fleshed out by reference to parallels. It is very interesting to see the process of inference and analysis set out so clearly, not least because it makes apparent the degree to which the new gardens at Kenilworth are educated guesswork. To say this does nothing to diminish the inherent interest of the reconstruction, nor the scholarly conviction of its recreated elements. Indeed, in both these senses the whole project has undeniably been a fascinating and valuable experiment. It has, moreover, hugely boosted visitor figures to the castle, which must be a good thing.

Yet the fact remains that it would be possible to read Langham's text – accommodating the limited archaeological and pictorial evidence – and come to very different conclusions about the garden that existed in 1575. At one extreme are general questions about the alternative arrangement of arbours or the existence and position of steps in the garden; Langham nowhere makes mention of them, nor was any archaeological trace for them found. There are besides lots of points of detail to mull over. One such is the interpretation of the word 'boll' as the object held by two atlantids in the central fountain. Was this really a 'ball' as recreated, or a 'bowl'? In the words of one essay 'it is impossible to be certain whether a 'bowl' or 'ball', is intended' (p.112). My own opinion is that the former is by far the most probable reading. Indeed, setting aside all other evidence the very usage of the word 'ball' in this context seems odd; surely 'sphere' or 'globe' would have tripped off the tongue of an Elizabethan as a description of the object on the recreated fountain.

For those interested in Kenilworth Castle and

Elizabethan court culture this book is a valuable, authoritative and important work. But to the world at large I would suggest that the real achievement of the authors and the measure by which they should be properly judged, is the garden they have collectively created. To decide about the recreation for yourself all you really need to do is take a photocopy of the relevant section of Langham's letter to the café in Kenilworth castle stable. There you should read it through slowly – and preferably aloud – before starting your visit. And then you should walk round the garden with the photocopy in hand, pausing to see in the recreation what Langham enjoyed on this spot over four hundred years ago. You may disagree in some points with what you see, but I challenge you not to enjoy the exercise (in both senses of the word).

JOHN GOODALL

Hopkins, Andrew, *Baldassare Longhena and Venetian Baroque Architecture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press (2012), xv + 356 pp., 348 figs, £55. ISBN 978-0-300-18109-8.

Santa Maria della Salute tends to appear in histories of architecture as an exception to the prevailing narrative of the Baroque which focuses on the 17th-century Rome of Bernini, Borromini and Cortona. Andrew Hopkins discussed the design, construction and votive purpose of this spectacularly-sited Venetian icon, setting it in the context of ducal ceremony in the Serenissima, in his monograph *Santa Maria Della Salute – Architecture and Ceremony in Baroque Venice* (2000), substantially developing the theme adumbrated in a groundbreaking essay in *Architectural History* (Vol.41, 1998), 'The influence of Ducal ceremony on church design in Venice'. Now, in a book first published in Italian in 2006, revised to take account of new research by himself and others, he has produced the first English-language monograph on the architect of genius, creator of the Salute, Baldassare Longhena, whose long career is documented here in a meticulously researched, sumptuous volume, distinguished not least by the superb photography of Alessandra Chemollo.

Born in 1596/97, the son of a stonemason from Brescia, Longhena became the head of the family workshop upon the deaths of his father

and uncle, when he was about twenty years old. The organisational and craft skills learned in the workshop had been supplemented by a short architectural training in theory and practice with Vincenzo Scamozzi, whose great, influential treatise, *L'Idée della architettura universale*, was published in 1615, the year before the death of its author. Longhena's first significant independent commission as an architect, a cenotaph for the Greek Orthodox community, was followed one year later, in 1620-21, by a commission to rebuild Palazzo Lollin on the Grand Canal; Giovanni Lollin having the Greek connections which perhaps brought the young architect to his notice. Longhena's ability to move easily in erudite and patrician circles as well as he did on the building site, enabled him to build the network of patronage which Hopkins reveals. He seems to have been a very personable and attractive figure, ready to listen to all. In a brief biographical account, Tommaso Temanza later recorded his 'calling to him the foremen, and many times also the most inexpert day labourers, and with them he discussed how the work was coming along'. He was an austere figure, always dressed in black, and, notwithstanding the steely quality manifested when he sent his brother to deal with a rival in 1625, was noted for his sweet nature and civil disposition. His personal qualities, along with his obvious ability, ensured a long and successful career: Hopkins lists ninety-one works from ceremonial furniture and monuments to churches, from rental housing to palaces, the last commission coming in 1681 (design for stuccoes in Palazzo Tron, S. Stae), the year before his death.

This is not a conventionally arranged monograph. Hopkins begins in Longhena's mid-career with the interior of S. Maria di Nazareth (the Scalzi) 'designed in a pioneering romanising mode with richly coloured marbles'. He eschewed here his normal preference for projecting columns in order to maintain the legibility of the spatial concept with its longitudinal axial focus on the brightly lit sanctuary and high altar. It is this emphasis on Longhena's desire for legibility and visual effects, his ability to anticipate viewpoints on predetermined routes, his harnessing of natural light and his stonemason's eye for the possibilities of coloured marbles, as well as monochromatic, which recurs throughout this volume. He was an architect without a consistent style or formula, varying according to the commission and the site, and in this respect he was more a successor to the protean Sansovino than he was to Palladio, an architect in pursuit of an idea of formal perfection. It

is perhaps this variety, deployed over a wide range of building types, ephemeral displays and sculptural monuments, that has inhibited hitherto a rounded account of a great career. Hopkins discusses the critical reception of the Venetian Baroque in general and the architect in particular, noting the critical neglect of his innovative designs for the Scalzi and for that extraordinary sculptural extravaganza, the Pesaro monument in the Frari, in favour of a concentration on the unavoidable masterpiece, the Salute; on the magnificent staircase and library adjoining the cloisters of S. Giorgio Maggiore; and on the exuberant apotheosis of the Venetian Baroque palace, Palazzo Pesaro, a building of 'gargantuan sculptural plasticity'. This Palazzo (now the Museum of Modern Art), one of his eight palaces, is 'carefully calibrated ... to express aspects of prestige and patriotism'. Each of these major works takes a central place in thematic chapters (on the Salute, monastic buildings, churches and monuments, and palaces), in which the author lays emphasis on Longhena's use of ornament and architectural form as a key to demonstrating his consistent spatial intelligence, rather than vainly attempting to identify any consistent style. For those who prefer a chronological approach, a sedulously documented Appendix of life and works is arranged by year; much of the documentation remains in Italian, although the principal documents have been translated into English in the main text.

In a contemporary English climate, in which architectural education takes seven years, rather than Longhena's two or three years with Scamozzi, and in which architects in their forties are regarded as youngsters embarking on their careers, it is perhaps surprising to see an architect capturing the commission for a building as significant as the Salute in his early thirties, even younger than Richard Rogers at the Pompidou Centre. The commission appears still more remarkable in the context of a city characterised by the strict procedures and hierarchy, which can often result in cultural conservatism. But by the time of the competition Longhena had prisons, palaces and a cathedral (Chioggia) behind him and an established reputation. He produced a design which was not only cheaper than that of his only serious rival Antonio Smeraldi ('il Fracao') – a longitudinal reworking of Palladio's Redentore (an appropriate model as an earlier votive, plague church) – but also demonstrated a complete understanding of the political, religious, functional and scenographic requirements of the brief: accommodating, with appropriate visibility,

the annual processional visit by the Doge and senators on 21st November, giving thanks to the Virgin for deliverance from the plague of 1630 which had killed one third of the population. In his memorandum accompanying the design, Longhena shrewdly noted the crucial connection between his design and Marian imagery: 'This church ... being dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, made me think, with what little talent God has bestowed on me, of building the church in the form of a rotunda, being in the shape of a crown, since it is dedicated to the Virgin ...'. He went on to explain the equally crucial elements of the plan, which would enable processions to take place on the principal feast days without congestion and confusion. There is one main door, with smaller doors to each side, allowing the Doge and senators to process directly through the central domed space to the sanctuary beyond, beneath a subsidiary dome, while the rest of the celebrants (the 5,000 members of the Scuole Grandi together with the clergy) later process through the smaller doors, moving around the central space in the octagonal ambulatory. Centrality and a longitudinal axis are here combined. The ambulatory, inspired by the 6th-century Early Christian church of S. Vitale, Ravenna, is, for Hopkins, fundamental to the success of the design in providing an innovative, but historically traditional, solution to the problem of accommodating large processional groups. The further advantage of this domed rotunda, with its remarkable sculptural decoration and massive, shell-like volutes, is that it is eminently visible to those arriving from the Lido to the east or along the Grand Canal from the west, and, on processional days, when the monochrome of the stonework is enlivened by the rich state costumes of the celebrants, it presents a coherent and magnificent view to those approaching by boat from S. Marco and to those crossing the temporary pontoon bridge from S. Moise.

The Salute is now ineradicably associated with the image of Venice as a whole. As Hopkins points out, this is urban scenographic architecture, established here as 'one of the key concepts of the mature Baroque', which has as its descendants the Sydney Opera House and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. It is also a structural triumph, testimony to the architect's great skill and to his training with Scamozzi. This is a dome of sixty feet in diameter, the inner of masonry, supporting the lantern, and the outer of wood, lead-covered, supported on a gothically skeletal structure, rather than on the massive walls, which might have been

expected, but would have invited subsidence. As Hopkins points out, the Salute was a declaration of power and continuity, a 'financially extravagant and architecturally exuberant state monument'. Longhena's architectural and scenographic masterpiece occupied him for the rest of his distinguished career; it was finished in 1687, five years after his death. He had the good fortune in 1670 to influence its setting further, when he designed the adjacent Somascian priory, whose austere facade, masking cloisters, monumental staircase and library, boasts two fine doorcases (one of which is blind), which harmoniously reflect the columnar disposition of the church at smaller scale. The Salute had become a key monument in the 'symbolic geography and imagery of the city' even before completion, a fame which continues to modern times with the rather bathetic observation that in 1980 'the reactionary English architect, Terry Quinlan [*sic*], designed a 'Salute birdcage' for Lord McAlpine which was then shipped off to their office in Perth, Australia'.

Although this review has followed precedent in devoting much of its space to the Salute, Hopkins has covered the whole of Longhena's long career in considerable detail. The architect's achievement is very well described and beautifully illustrated with drawings and photographs. Hopkins is a careful and thoughtful analyst of the buildings and their critical reception. As indicated above, he has been thinking, questioning and writing about this subject for quite a few years. He is judicious, not given to making extravagant claims on behalf of his architect: there are no resounding conclusions, but the spatial intelligence and the search for light and legibility which informs Longhena's practice is made abundantly clear. Hopkins, Chemollo and Yale University Press have done full justice to a great architect. Perhaps now the narrative of the Baroque can begin to shift its geographical focus.

JOHN BOLD

Salter, Alicia, *Four Emperors and an Architect – How Robert Adam rediscovered the Tetrarchy*, Alresford: Lexicon Publishing (2013), 196pp., 195 figs, £20. ISBN 978-0-9575719-0-7.

Alicia Salter has done what she set out to do – to write an accessible introduction to the history and

architecture of an intriguing period. She fully understands the peculiarity of her enterprise: 'to compare two such different men as a Roman Emperor and a Scots Architect is a challenge'. This is indeed a very idiosyncratic book, which might have been better titled 'The Late-Roman Architecture of the Balkans and beyond'. The enterprise often creaks, as chapters on Robert Adam at Diocletian's Palace at Spalatro (modern Split, Croatia) and, in practice in England, are interspersed among chapters on the buildings of the Tetrarchy, as well as those of its immediate predecessors and successors in Croatia, Serbia, Thessaloniki, Trier, Rome and Egypt; from the piers of Trajan's 2nd-century bridge over the Danube, a few miles downstream from the cataracts of the Iron Gates, to the Roman Wall at York, where Constantius, one of the four members of the Tetrarchy, died in 306.

The accession of the Emperor Diocletian, sealed by his victory over Carinus in 285 at the Battle of the Margus (at Smederevo, south of modern Belgrade), was followed by his appointment of Maximian as co-Emperor. Eight years later, in acknowledgment of the impossibility of maintaining order in the far-flung Empire and defending its boundaries, two Caesars were appointed to assist the two Emperors (hence their shorthand title, 'Four Emperors'). So Galerius and Constantius joined Diocletian and Maximian as junior partners, who would themselves take over and appoint two new assistants when the long-established leaders stepped down in 305. The far-sighted and cultured Diocletian precipitated the ending of this very successful partnership, in which he had been complemented by a man seen by Gibbon as 'ignorant of letters, careless of laws', but more charitably viewed by Salter as 'tough, fearless and willing to carry out any task, however unpleasant'. Responsibilities were divided geographically: Diocletian took the eastern provinces; Maximian, Italy and Africa; Galerius, the Danube provinces; and Constantius, the western. The system worked well under Diocletian's overall authority, but did not long survive his abdication. Although two short tetrarchies followed, so did civil war (including an attempted comeback by Maximian), until the Empire was reunited under Constantine, sole Emperor from 324-5, who transferred the seat of government to Byzantium and re-named it after himself.

The author navigates us well through the political complexities, pointing out the architectural highlights with which she has become familiar in her role as a researcher and leader of guided tours. Notable among these are the splendidly grand

arch and rotunda of Galerius in Thessaloniki, the mausolea he built for himself and his mother at his palace of Felix Romuliana in Serbia and the magnificent basilica and imperial baths of Constantius at Trier in the Rhineland. Little survives of Maximian's palace in Milan, but in Rome he supervised the building of the Baths of Diocletian, the central section of which was transformed by Michelangelo into the church and monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli. So we are given a Grand Tour of the Empire, which includes much which is little known to those who have confined their architectural tourism to more well-trodden western paths. Split is an exception, since even in the days of the former Yugoslavia, the Dalmatian coast of Croatia was a tourist centre. It was here that Diocletian, born nearby, commissioned his monumental palace in 296 for the retirement which he spent here until his death in 312. Much of this massive complex survives since, as Salter notes, it has been adaptable to the needs of successive generations. It has served as a military camp, a market and a shopping centre and Fodor's guide to Yugoslavia (1960) notes the presence of hotels. The Slavs made it the centre of the medieval town; the Temple of Jupiter became the Christian Cathedral and the Temple of Aesculapius the Baptistery. It has not been cleaned up, so it has a vibrancy lacking in most ancient monuments, with cafes, apartments, shops and clubs. In a recent Diary account in the *London Review of Books* (26.9.13), Rosemary Hill has noted that 'the visitor whose expectations have been formed by Robert Adam's *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro* of 1764, may feel momentarily taken aback, but in essence nothing has changed for the palace is not in the city, the city is in the palace and it has been there, growing and adapting, for more than a thousand years'.

It was after over two years in Rome, that Robert Adam made his remarkably shrewd career move and came to Spalatro in 1757, following the suggestion of Piranesi, to record and reconstruct on paper the previously little-regarded palace as a prime example of a Roman domestic building. He was after all, on returning to England, more likely to be designing houses than temples or baths. Accompanied by Charles-Louis Clerisseau, who, in John Fleming's account (*Robert Adam and his Circle*, 1962) combined 'a pictorial with an archaeological approach' to the recording of monuments, Adam was assisted also by two young draughtsmen. All worked at speed to complete their comprehensive

survey within the five weeks allowed by the Venetian authorities, who objected to their digging and suspected them of spying. As the ever-competitive Adam noted in a letter to his brother James, four people working for five weeks was equal to twenty weeks of one person; Robert Wood, working on his survey for *The Ruins of Palmyra* (1753) had only fifteen days with just one man to help him: 'judge then of the accuracy of such a work!'

This was one of the great periods of investigation of the classical past, in which antiquarian enthusiasm and architectural ambition fuelled the investigation of the hitherto unexplored: Wood's *The Ruins of Baalbec* (1757) and Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens* (1762) both preceded Adam's sumptuous folio. With engravings by Bartolozzi and others, this was a publishing and marketing triumph, seven years in the making, with which the author laid claim to 'the archaeological scholarship that was now one of the credentials of a serious neo-classical architect' (H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 2008). Salter quotes Adam's own description of his subsequent architectural style as 'directed but not cramped by antiquity'. She demonstrates his decorative and spatial innovation, much of it influenced by his experience of Spalatro, in his interventions within the constraints of existing houses at Kedleston, Osterley, Bowood, Saltram and Syon, where, amidst all the grandeur and clever planning, he demonstrated the difficulty inherent in using the Ionic order to articulate corners. Kedleston in particular shows the fruits of his studies, as Sir John Soane observed (quoted by Salter): 'In this superb structure he has united ... the taste and magnificence of a Roman villa with all the comforts and conveniences of an Englishman's noble residence'. Soane was later to acquire Adam's drawings, which are now in the Soane Museum, so 'Diocletian's palace passed into the academic lore of British architecture'.

Alicia Salter has self-published this attractively produced book. It is well illustrated with prints, photographs, maps, reconstruction drawings (whose authorship is not stated), and includes an 'axiometric' of Syon (this is a cut-away aerial perspective, not an axonometric), but there could usefully have been more. There are remarkably few of Adam's drawings or engravings of Spalatro and indeed in the description of the palace, fundamental to the whole story, it is not always easy to see where we are on the plan. Also, although this is not intended as a scholarly book, there are misleading

errors of fact. We are told that Palladio has been recorded as making a drawing of the palace, with a reference to the *Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* (published 1570, not 1660) but this must have been a very brief visit, yielding one measured drawing of the main surviving elements, the plans of the temples and the colonnaded forecourt, not enough to make it into the publication. Salter also mentions the inclusion of the palace in Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurf einer historischen Architektur*, said to have been published in 1712, with an English translation in 1725. Both of these dates are wrong. Some proof plates were presented to the Emperor Charles VI in 1712, but the book was not published in its entirety until 1721, with a second edition in 1725, from which the English edition of 1730, *A Plan of Civil and Historical Architecture*, was taken.

There is enough material here for two books and in fact their yoking together makes this an unwieldy account, not always easy to follow. Salter's desire to intertwine the stories of her principal protagonists, the Emperor and the Architect, leads to a delightfully absurd category confusion: Diocletian's life ended in disappointment, 'his early success forgotten in the turmoil which followed his abdication'. Adam too 'was to suffer deep disappointment as he grew older. For all his success ... [he] was never fully admitted to the heart of the English establishment'. He had courted financial disaster with his innovative Adelphi development, but he recovered; he was blocked, probably by Sir William Chambers, from becoming a member of the Royal Academy, but he was with Chambers one of the two Architects of the King's Works, a post relinquished when he became an MP; he was a Fellow of the Royal Society; he was buried in Westminster Abbey – there is no monument but there is a plaque. This sounds remarkably like great success. This judgement aside, and notwithstanding the difficulties which the book presents, Alicia Salter is to be congratulated on her rediscovery and presentation of some of the great, but lesser known, monuments of antiquity in the parts less travelled.

JOHN BOLD

Tyack, Geoffrey (ed.), *John Nash: Architect of the Picturesque*, Swindon: English Heritage (2013), 198 pp., 211 ills, £60. ISBN 978-1-84802-102-0

John Nash (1752-1835) is one of the most famous, most fascinating and most mysterious of British architects. The mystery and the fascination were there from the beginning of his long and varied career, which ended in a blaze of publicity and ignominy over the completion of George IV's Buckingham Palace. During the century after his death his works were scorned and by the 1930s many of his London buildings were threatened with demolition. Only with John Summerson's pioneering biography, published in 1935, did Nash's architecture begin to be taken seriously. Terence Davis's monographs of 1960 and 1966 followed,¹ and then sumptuous monographs, on Buckingham Palace (J. Harris et al., 1968) and Brighton Pavilion (J. Morley, 1984).² Michael Mansbridge's comprehensively illustrated catalogue of 1991 showed the state of research at that point.³

The present book appears at first glance to be another general survey of Nash's architecture, but is not quite that. It consists of nine papers delivered at a conference mounted by The Georgian Group in 2009, edited and with an excellent introductory overview of Nash's career and achievements by Geoffrey Tyack. The book is outstandingly well illustrated, with a full range of colour photographs, numerous historic photographs and plans from the archives of English Heritage, and liberal use of engravings published in the 1820s and 30s which presented Nash's new London buildings in the most glamorous way possible. The book's illustrative high point is the forty-three-view promenade through Nash's redeveloped central London, from Park Crescent at the entrance to Regent's Park to the arcade and network of streets which he devised to link in to the west end of the Strand.

Nash's career got off to a slow start. After early exposure through family contacts to builders and engineers, and a thorough professional grounding in the office of Sir Robert Taylor, he engaged in an overambitious speculation which bankrupted him. He was also keen to escape from a disastrous marriage and in 1785, aged thirty-three, moved to South Wales in order to start afresh.

This time things went well and twelve years later he was able to move back to London, remarry and develop a large and busy practice, which continued on an upward trajectory until his late seventies. The authors of several chapters dwell

on his personality, his resilience, his affability, his plausibility, all (within limits) desirable attributes in an architect. It is also clear that he had a ruthless streak, especially in money matters, as is shown in a particularly harsh light in his dealings with the canons of St David's Cathedral.⁴

In South Wales and the Marches, Nash had the good fortune to meet the two protagonists of Picturesque theory, Uvedale Price and Payne Knight, as well as Humphry Repton, the landscape gardener who was putting their ideas into practice. The period up to 1796 is excellently covered in Suggett's chapter, expanded from his study of Nash in Wales, published in 1995. It stresses his early development as a house planner of considerable originality. David Whitehead's chapter on Nash in Herefordshire serves by way of supplement and also includes Repton's account of their first meeting, which took place at Stoke Edith and led to their fruitful and aesthetically momentous partnership during the late 1790s.

The two ensuing chapters, Tyack's on Nash's domestic Gothic and Rosemary Yallop's on his three rural Italianate villas of the first decade of the 19th century, follow two strands of his rapidly burgeoning practice and show how, once he was based in London, it soon became nationwide, and particularly strong in Ireland. However, his classical mansions (Southgate Grove, Sundridge Park, Witley Court) are treated only tangentially, with illustrations accompanying the list of works at the end of the book; and the same is true of Blaise Hamlet, conceptually a much more significant work.

Throughout his career Nash freely used structural ironwork in a great variety of contexts. Jonathan Clarke's chapter shows how many of the most memorable and idiosyncratic effects in Nash's oeuvre were made possible by the unconventional use of iron construction, in bridges, staircases, domes, with or without accompanying timberwork. Family connections to some of the early Shropshire ironmasters seem to have given him his expertise and self-belief in this area. He also clearly had the confidence of a wide range of master craftsmen and depended on expert clerks of works, notably William Nixon at Brighton Pavilion and Buckingham Palace. Stories of structural collapses and clients' complaints seem to have been true in only a small number of cases.

The last two decades of Nash's career were dominated by Brighton Pavilion and Buckingham Palace, for which Nash worked as the personal architect of the Prince Regent, later George IV, and

by the 'Metropolitan Improvements' of Regent's Park with its Picturesque landscaping, its terraces and villas, and Regent Street, which reshaped the West End of London as it linked the new park to Westminster. Here the Royal Palaces are in the hands of Michael Port, the Park in those of J. Mordaunt Crook, the familiar stories both much enriched by new research and illustration. Tyack's chapter on Regent Street is equally rich and convincing.

At Brighton, with its domes and minarets and its exotic interiors, all dependent on technical daring, Nash was at his most original. At Buckingham Palace equally enterprising structural ironwork was employed to more conventional visual effect. His role at Regent's Park and Regent Street was different, master-minding and controlling huge building programmes, and willingly delegating design of individual buildings and street frontages to subordinate architects. Here general effects and groupings mattered more than niceties of design. But it is instructive that the most daring effects can be traced to Nash's personal intervention, the elongated domes of Sussex Place, the transverse triumphal arches at Chester Terrace, and the dramatic false pediment in the centre of Cumberland Terrace.

The book ends with a short, but fascinating, chapter in which David Watkin brings together the scanty, but telling, comments on Nash and his architecture by his most fastidious contemporaries, Soane, Schinkel and C.R. Cockerell. He notes that Cockerell, for all his critique of Nash's slapdash classicism, paid his memory the very great compliment of considering him worthy of a published biography at a time when no English architect other than Wren had as yet received one.

JOHN NEWMAN

NOTES

- 1 T. Davis, *The Architecture of John Nash* (London, Studio Books, 1960); id., *John Nash: the Prince Regent's Architect* (London, Country Life Books, 1966).
- 2 J. Harris, G. De Bellaigue and O. Millar, *Buckingham Palace* (London, Nelson, 1968); J. Morley, *The Making of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton: Design and Drawings* (London, Philip Wilson Books, 1984).
- 3 M. Mansbridge, *John Nash: A Complete Catalogue* (Oxford, Phaidon, 1991).
- 4 See Richard Suggett's newly published article in *The Georgian Group Journal*, XXI (2013).

Darling, Elizabeth, *Wells Coates*, London: RIBA Publishing (2012), 162 pp., 155 ills, £20. ISBN 978-1-85946-437-3.

This, the first scholarly study of Coates' work since Sherban Cantacuzino's 1978 monograph, is a welcome addition to the literature of architectural history. It is the latest in the series 'Twentieth Century Architects' published jointly by the Twentieth Century Society and English Heritage, most volumes of which are devoted to the architects of the post-Second World War period. A volume on an important inter-war modernist in this attractive series is a very welcome addition.

Coates is a significant – arguably the most significant – modernist of the period. Despite his talent for self-publicity, and his inveterate networking, he remains an oddly inscrutable character. This book allows a glimpse behind the facade of a man driven by ambition and by a highly original vision of an appropriate environment for the needs and conditions of the twentieth century. Coates' talent as designer, his ruthlessness in pursuit of his schemes, and his tendency to dogmatism emerge from this account. In 1999, his daughter Laura Cohen published a portrait of her father, *The Door to a Secret Room*, which reveals something of what drove this dashing but combative architect. What the present book does is rather different. Within the space of 141 pages (plus an eleven-page list of works and a bibliography), we are presented with a crisp and intelligent analysis of Coates' design work, accompanied by some superb illustrations. More importantly, the book probes the extraordinary work of designing, organising and proselytising which Coates undertook from 1928 until his premature death of a heart attack thirty years later.

Its structure is ingenious. After two chapters which establish the biographical and social context for Coates's career, the third and longest chapter, 'Marketing Modernism', examines how he persuaded clients and developers to embrace his ideas and the ways in which his theories and his architecture intersected. The final chapter represents a marked anti-climax after the intensely creative pre-war years. Coates returned from wartime service in the RAF interested in industrialised architecture, in town-planning and in product design. After securing only a handful of commissions, he left England for Canada in the early 1950s where he combined teaching with designs for a new town in Iroquois, and projects for Toronto Island and Vancouver, none of which materialised.

The book makes some shrewd points. The most important is that Britain's modern movement was already in train by the 1930s. Darling challenges the claim that it was the arrival of émigrés from continental Europe and the reception of the work of architects like Le Corbusier which introduced modern architecture and design to Britain. She counters this by describing the fascinating bohemian milieu of London in the late 1920s, in which Coates mixed with film actors, artists, entrepreneurs and progressive thinkers. This was the pool from which he drew his first clients and where he honed his determination to create the framework for a new way of living. Most fascinating is the account of the flat which Coates created for his own use from a 1890s studio in London. This, with its open plan, lightweight furniture and ingenious duplex structure was where he entertained his friends, forcing them to squat or to recline around the hearth in Japanese style. The three blocks of flats he designed – the Lawn Road flats in Hampstead, Embassy Court in Brighton, and Palace Gate in Kensington – are succinctly analysed with regard to the different types of residents they catered for, with architectural, social and structural aspects skilfully kept in balance.

Equally enlightening is the discussion of Coates' unconventional formation as an architect. He had no architectural training at all and his education consisted of lessons with private tutors followed by a first degree at the University of British Columbia and then a doctorate at London University in mechanical engineering. He burst like a rocket onto the architectural scene in Britain – which in the 1930s was divided between the old system of pupillage and the newer Beaux-Arts mode of university training – his knowledge of how things fitted together and his delight in technology driving his innovative use of monolithic concrete at Lawn Road and making his work for furniture and wireless companies so successful. This aspect of Coates makes it all the more curious that he did not prosper in the 1940s and 1950s. This was the era when many architects were using the pre-fabricated components and light-weight materials derived from war-time production to design and build temporary houses and schools and shops. Coates did design one factory-made house, the AIROH aluminium bungalow, but other innovative designs remained on the drawing board. Coates was not patient enough to make the transition from war to peace-time, to sit out the years before 1954 when building was restricted to the utilitarian or to the

temporary architecture of exhibitions. Darling suggests, plausibly, that he might have been more successful had he cultivated politicians rather than private industry during the post-war era. Perhaps another problem was that the tough, efficient, technocratic persona which Coates cultivated in the 1930s was at odds with what Michael Frayn dubbed the 'herbivores' of the Festival of Britain; compared with the more clubbable and well-connected Hugh Casson, Coates was at a significant disadvantage.

Readers of this journal will appreciate the Afterword to the book which describes the conservation of Embassy Court and the Lawn Road Flats. One wonders what Coates himself would have thought about the recuperation and careful grooming of buildings which were designed for the very specific conditions of the inter-war period. He might have raised his eyebrows at the principle of conserving modern buildings, but would surely have relished the advent of a new generation of hip urban residents for whom good design is an important aspect of their identity.

LOUISE CAMPBELL

Antram, Nicholas, and Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Sussex: East with Brighton and Hove*, Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England series, New Haven and London: Yale University Press (2013), 800 pp., 123 photos, 54 text ills and 8 maps, £35. ISBN 978-0-300-18473-0

The Pevsner Architectural Guides (hereafter 'the series') are doubtless familiar to all readers, both in their original Penguin published pocket size and the larger size format of the current publishers, Yale University Press. They are, of course, not only architectural guides, but also significant contributions to local history, rightly recognised by the award to the series of the 2013 Longmans/History Today Trustees award for 'a major contribution to history'. The latest revision of the series – at least at the time of writing (they now come thick and fast) – is this volume, by the late Nicholas Antram (completed, including writing the Introduction, by Charles O'Brien at Yale). The Yale published volumes of the series are much larger, hardly fitting in anything smaller than a poacher's pocket. The coverage of the major conurbations has led to more volumes, though until now the

format has been one volume per county for the shire counties, except in cases such as Kent and Gloucestershire, where there was more than one volume in the original series.

However, Sussex now breaks with that. The original 1965 edition – slightly revised in 1970 – was divided between two authors. Ian Nairn wrote the West Sussex part, before crying off, and Pevsner himself completed the rest. It is the Pevsner-authored portion revised here, though readers should note that the boundary is that of the current administrative county of East Sussex. Areas now administratively in West Sussex will, along with the rest of the county, have to await the further volume. The resulting coverage of East Sussex is substantially enhanced: 596 pages of *Gazetteer*, themselves some 20% larger (as opposed to 250 pages in the 1965 edition), though a generous allocation of text figures and maps somewhat reduces the expansion of the text. A general Introduction is followed by the usual two essays on geology and building stones (Bernard Worssam) and on Prehistoric, Roman and Pagan Saxon Sussex (David Rudling). Both cover the whole of the county, whereas the substantial part of the Introduction on the later periods that follows is entirely on East Sussex. Well written and readable, it gives a solid and informative start, both as to the buildings of the county and its historical context, and is a key accompaniment to the use of the *Gazetteer*.

Sussex, of course, includes one major urban area, Brighton and Hove, which falls within this volume. However, a volume in the *City Guides* paperback series (written by Antram with Richard Morrice) was published to cover that area in 2008, so this review concentrates on the revision of the 1965 text.

At the end of the original series, Pevsner acknowledged that the earlier volumes gave inadequate coverage to the railways. It is therefore always interesting to see how the revisions treat them. The Introduction gives us a solid page or so on this subject (pp.64-65) and railway architecture features consistently. There is an excellent account of Brighton Station (if shorter than that in Antram and Morrice) and generally station buildings are given their due weight in the *Gazetteer*, even if references to the 'attractive standard designs' of T.W. Myres for the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway Co. becomes a little repetitive. Interestingly, Brighton aside, the South Eastern Railway Co. (SER) may have provided the more architecturally impressive stations.

One of the great features of the series is the perambulation provided for each and every town

and, indeed, every village containing sufficient buildings of interest to merit such an exercise. Therefore, this reviewer set off to field-test the entry for Rye. This ancient town is a great example of the virtues of the perambulation. It contains much of interest, but no great monuments and indeed, apart from the church and the defences, everything about Rye is described in the perambulation. There is, alas, no map of the modern town. The practice of different authors in the series on whether or not to provide a map to assist the perambulation is varied. The new editions on Kent by John Newman contain excellent maps for that purpose, others do not. However, there is a plan of the town reconstructed as in 1667, and this serves reasonably well for the visitor's purpose. This reminds the walker that the flatland and rivers surrounding the town on three sides were sea in the medieval and indeed into the modern period, when the tide so willed. As noted above, we must remember the local history importance, as well as the architectural purpose, of the series and the map serves the former well.

The new volume starts its account of Rye with a much expanded introduction on the town as a whole, giving a better understanding of its historical background. Pevsner's fine word portrait is retained, but much hard information is added. The account of the church, from where both perambulations start, again retains much of Pevsner's original wording, but is significantly expanded. Space saved by dropping the description of the church plate to be found in the earlier volumes is more than compensated for by a much fuller account of the furnishings, including the very interesting late 19th and 20th century stained glass; though is the retention of Pevsner's characterisation of the Morris & Co. (1897) window in the north aisle as 'sentimental' quite fair? It is not one of their best efforts, but anodyne would seem a better description. It seems to have been a rather large early church. Is that why, most unusually for a significant medieval urban area, there were no other parish churches, as Antram points out, and it seems only two, not particularly significant, friaries? Perhaps Rye always tended to the secular.

Antram's perambulation is different, as well as rather more detailed. He has Mermaid Street and then down West Street as the finale, whereas Pevsner chose to finish with the High Street. Antram's decision to end with Mermaid Street may reflect his view of the best buildings in Rye, but also involves having to walk both up and down Watchbell Street, something Pevsner's route avoided. One point on Antram's text, which may seem pedantic, but I

assure you is less so when you are making your way up the steep, cobbled Mermaid Street, is inconsistent directions. You are told to look to your right (sensibly abbreviated) and then you are referred to the north side, which you eventually realise just means 'look left'. Still, a pleasant and informed walk in a lovely historic town, proving the value of the volume under review. For those with wider historical and cultural interests, the many writers and artists who lived in Rye can be found on the plaques on the buildings, though of course they are not part of the description. Finally, you can finish, where you may well have begun your visit, with William Tress's station, the grandest of the SER's Italianate edifices.

So we have another fine updating and expansion of this series that gives so much to the lovers of history and architecture; a book to be used, as well as consulted. The indices are good and user friendly, following the standard approach of the series. The production quality is up to the usual high standards, with one caveat. The new style computer-generated Index Map on pp. ii-iii seems ill-designed for a double-page spread and the print too small, so that the reference numbers round the margins are virtually indistinguishable. This is clearly a publication and design issue: it has also happened earlier in the 2013 and indeed 2012 volumes e.g. Newman's West Kent.

The 123 photographs, in colour these days, give a wonderful glimpse of the glories of East Sussex. Those photographs are always worth flicking through, as, although the series never sinks to giving you a list of the five, ten or fifty 'must see' buildings, a quick glance through the photos always gives you an *aide memoire* of some of the outstanding sights of the area. The terraces and squares of Brighton and Hove, medieval Winchelsea, Battle Abbey and Bodiam Castle – to name just a few. Rye has three photographs featuring, appropriately, Mermaid Street, No 31 in that street and Peacocks School: those three also appeared in the photographs in the original volume, though that last fine, Dutch style building was perhaps Pevsner's favourite. I am not sure Antram shared that view, but this excellent book leaves that choice to happy perambulators, even if their feet are a little sore from the cobbles and their wrists from carrying the book open.

A volume no reader living, working or holidaying in East Sussex can sensibly do without.

GRAHAM KENT

Jordan, Tim, *Cotswold Stone Barns*, Stroud: Amberley (2011), 96 pp., about 200 ills, £14.99. ISBN 978-1-4456-0181-6.

This book describes itself as a 'pictorial essay', and indeed its character is well indicated by listing its main themes. It starts with a series of photographs of the great medieval barns of the region, including well-photographed interiors, covering principally Middle Littleton, Siddington – an excellent interior of a barn I have only seen full of hay – Frocester, Great Coxwell, Bredon and Bradford-on-Avon. These are followed by field barns, finials, porches and lofts, cart entrances and threshing floors, graffiti and apotropaic marks, doorways, owl holes and perches – complete with owl – ventilation slits, dovecotes, ornamental barns (notably those on the Badminton estate), date stones (of the 18th and 19th centuries, apart from an indecipherable photo of that of 1382 at Church Enstone), carpenters marks and roof slates and thatch. The images of ventilation slots are particularly interesting, including several of the so-called 'candle slots', in which the main slot has a smaller diamond-shaped hole above it – a type that it is only possible to explain as idiosyncratic.

The later sections of the book are rather more arbitrary in their order and include: additions and alterations, external stairs, machinery, steam power, engine and horse-engine houses, model farms and redundancy. Examples are also shown of conversions to domestic use, wedding venues, museums, restaurants and workshops.

The book is attractively produced with photographs that are generally excellent. It provides a good introduction to the most characteristic farm building type of the region, but should not be looked to for in-depth discussion of, for example, development of the barn or its roofing or comparative dimensions.

NAT ALCOCK

