

REVIEWS

*The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy, bishop of Amiens*, edited by Catherine Morton and Hope Munz. 8½ in. × 5½ in. Pp. lxxvi+149, pls. 5, maps 2. Oxford Medieval Texts, 1972. £4.50.

A new and accessible edition of this text is something of an event. Giles' edition of 1845 was mainly a copy of Francisque Michel's unsatisfactory one of 1840, but it has been the only text commonly used in this country. Even worse, since 1944, when G. H. White attacked the authenticity of the work, English scholars have been inclined to doubt whether the poem was written by Guy or whether it was a contemporary account of the Hastings campaign at all. We now have at last a text based on the manuscripts; and the editors argue persuasively that it is indeed the work of Guy of Amiens himself, and was perhaps written as early as 1067, which would make it prior to William of Poitiers, and the earliest original text for the campaign of 1066.

If this case proves acceptable, and I suspect it will, we must look again at the *Carmen*. It has much less detail than William of Poitiers; but, if we read it with a fresh eye, there is an actuality about its account, and an unusual vividness, particularly in its description of places. There are a number of points in the account of the battle itself, particularly the suggestion that William was taken by surprise at the start when Harold seized the hill where Battle Abbey now stands, and so was unable to deploy his forces as he had hoped before the battle began. But Kentish archaeologists will look especially at the description of Dover, and the account of William's activities there. In four lines:

*Est ibi mons altus, strictum mare, litus opacum.  
Hinc hostes cecius Anglica regna petunt.  
Set castrum Douere, pendens a uertice montis  
Hostes reiciens, litora tuta facit.*

there is a topographical picture almost unique in medieval texts, and compelling evidence of a pre-Conquest castle, which our field-workers have yet conclusively to find. Guy also tells us of the expulsion of the English inhabitants of the city, of the settlement there of the king's Norman followers as a security; and of the mission of the citizens of Canterbury to Dover to make their submission as the first of the other towns of England to do so. In a page or so, Guy tells us most of what we know of the early incidents in the Norman conquest of Kent. It is a text that ought to be examined by all interested in the subject.

BRUCE WEBSTER

## REVIEWS

*The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin.* By D. W. Harding. 9½ × 7¼ in. Pp. 178, 81 pls. (+1 colour frontispiece), 9 figs. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972. £10.

This well-produced book is, substantially, Dr. Harding's Oxford D.Phil. thesis, a study of the pre-Roman Iron Age in the Upper Thames basin in relation 'to adjacent regions of S. Britain'; it is this latter aspect, with its wider implications, that makes this study such an important contribution to Iron Age literature, quite apart from its importance for the narrower area with which it is closely concerned.

Dr. Harding's chapter headings and the division of the book into two parts, each dealing separately with settlements in the region and the chronology secured from the study of their material remains, follow a logical sequence examining both the environmental aspect and typology of his sites, their economic and social organization, and their setting within the chronological framework provided by their artifacts; the historical summary and conclusions of his survey are a model of scholarly caution. As well as a copious bibliography, there is included a detailed gazetteer of sites which will be of the greatest value to other workers in this field.

From the point of view of work not primarily concerned with Dr. Harding's region, the most important feature of this book is the very detailed publication of the finds. Thirty-nine plates are devoted mainly to pottery but also to metalwork and coins; it is in this section and in the notes provided that many parallels will be found with other sites in the south-east and help perhaps in sorting out some at least of the complications of Iron Age pottery. It is to be regretted, however, that it was decided to print these text figures as plates on heavy art paper; for this must, undoubtedly, be the main reason for the high price of this book which will place it beyond the reach of the average student, a fate which this study certainly does not deserve.

A. P. DETSICAS

*Some Kent Children.* By Margaret Phillips. A new history teaching unit based on K.C.C. Archives. Outer cover and seven separate folders. K.C.C. Supplies Department, Maidstone, 1972. £1 (70p for schools).

These folders, illustrating aspects of the lives of Kent children from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, represent tremendous value for money. Each contains abundant illustrative material, including facsimiles of documents, photographs of places, monuments and museum objects, with very full explanatory notes for teachers and students. Inevitably, the best sections are those that are based upon

private family papers, for example, the diary of Eva Knatchbull-Huggessen, aged 12, for 1873 and the collection of schoolboys' letters from 1670-1790—one cannot but have a fellow-feeling for Tom Sackville, aged 10, who ended his school letter in 1672 with

'I was in hast or els I wold a writ better and more'.

Of the others, perhaps the 'Borough Child' and the 'Parish Child' are the best but all contain material of interest which would be difficult to find elsewhere. The collection will be of great value to teachers who appreciate the value of using original documentary material in the teaching of history.

A. C. HARRISON

*The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial.* By R. Bruce-Mitford. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.  $\times$  7 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.  
Pp. 103, 8 colour plates, 34 monochrome plates, 36 line drawings.  
British Museum, 1972. £1.50.

It is thirty-three years since the excavation of the Sutton Hoo ship and its unrivalled treasure, the study of which has revolutionized our concept of seventh-century cultural attainment. In 1947, the British Museum issued a Provisional Guide to the material when it was first placed on exhibition, the Second World War having prevented previous display or publication. The conclusions reached then remain for the most part unchallenged, although intensive research on several objects and leisurely reappraisal of the circumstances of the burial now call for some correction and restatement. The new handbook, reviewed here, brings us up to date with the latest scholarly conclusions and is, both in its text and illustrations, of exemplary standard. Little more can be attempted in this review than to mention several of the new interpretations which differ from those previously accepted.

None of the thirty-seven associated Merovingian gold coins is now considered later than A.D. 630 and the likely date for the assembly is put at 625. This makes it probable that the king commemorated was Raedwald (*d.* 625/6) who was converted to Christianity during a visit to Aethelbert's court in Kent but lapsed into partial paganism later. Bede says that he had a temple in which was 'an altar for the Sacrifice of Christ side by side with an altar on which victims were offered to devils'. The curious mixture of Christian and heathen associations in the ship accords very well with these historical circumstances. Aethelhere (*d.* 654), once the favourite candidate, is now ruled out as being too late. A phosphate concentration associated with the sword, traced in re-excavating the site in 1966-8, suggests that there may, after all, have been a body laid on the keel-line, and the ship and its contents

## REVIEWS

were not necessarily a cenotaph, the extreme acidity of the soil having destroyed all visible traces of bones and teeth.

As for the ship itself, it may have possessed a sail in the opinion of Harald Åkerlund, despite the lack of direct evidence of a mast noted by the excavators. Opinion on some aspects of the structure has been modified and the provisional drawings made in 1939-40 by the Science Museum require considerable correction as to detail.

Recent work on the helmet has led to a new reconstruction, and the bronze stag, once thought to have surmounted the iron stand, is shown in fact to have formed the finial of the whetstone-sceptre—an impressive symbol of kingly authority. Fragments of what was first recognized as a harp are reconstructed as a lyre, and the previous restoration of the two drinking horns is seen to be in need of revision.

There is less connection with Kent than might appear on first consideration. The cloisonné jewellery is different in all-over style from the Kentish products and may have derived from Swedish workshops. But gold-foil backing of the garnet-set cells is paralleled in Kent, as is the filigree on the shoulder-clasps, while a brooch from Faversham is recognized as of the 'Sutton Hoo' school. Swedish influence is predominant, notably in the helmet, shield, great buckle and purse-lid decoration, suggesting that the ruling house of East Anglia, the Wuffingas, was of Swedish origin.

Even a work of such scholarship as this is not without blemishes, and one is startled to find on p. 68, in discussing the significance of the Saulos and Paulos spoons, that St. Paul the Apostle is described twice as having been a pagan before his conversion to Christianity.

P. J. TESTER

*Field Archaeology in Britain.* By John Coles. 8 × 5½ in. Pp. 267, 78 figs., 8 pls. Methuen, London, 1972. £3.50. (Also published as a University Paperback, £1.75.)

It is now twenty-five years since Methuen published Atkinson's *Field Archaeology*, destined to become an indispensable aid to professional and amateur field workers alike and soon out of print; in that time archaeology, boosted by television and the publicity given to some dramatic discoveries, became very popular as seen in the continuous growth of local societies and research groups. To cater for this popularity, there followed a spate of textbooks setting out to ensure that at least some of this activity was well informed, notable amongst them Kenyon's *Beginning in Archaeology* (1953), Piggott's *Approach to Archaeology* (1959) and Webster's *Practical Archaeology* (1963); now Coles enters this field with his well-presented manual which, in many

## REVIEWS

respects, is not unlike Atkinson's in conception, though naturally it does contain several advances in archæological technology since 1946.

The author is a prehistorian and, as perhaps is to be expected, this period receives prominence; indeed, two of his chapter headings are 'Prehistoric archæology' and 'The organization of prehistoric archæology in Britain', but this emphasis need not in the least deter those interested in other archæological fields. It is, of course, a commonplace in archæology that, apart from matters generally of detail, basic techniques vary normally little from one period to another, and this book admirably demonstrates this. In six chapters, it covers a diversity of subjects both technical, such as surveying, recording and preservation, and procedural, like how sites may come to light and what steps may be needed before their exploration may be undertaken as well as topics of a more personal nature, such as labour relations and what the author engagingly calls 'conscience and confession'; this reviewer read with admiration a whole chapter devoted entirely to 'Understanding the evidence', a topic that some field workers may justifiably be accused of often neglecting. The book is illustrated by many diagrams and drawings, very clearly reproduced, and several photographs; here, perhaps, an opportunity was missed, in a manual with such a general title, of including a few plates of other sites, too, and redress the balance so heavily in favour of prehistory.

The publishers should be congratulated not only for adding yet another title to their long list of archæological publications but also for a first-class production which is very easy to the eye; and the author for writing such a book in a lucid and pleasant style which succeeds in its aim, to inform and supplement its predecessors in this field—it wholly deserves to follow its parent and soon become out of print.

A. P. DETSICAS

*Thomas Johnson—Botanical Journey in Kent and Hampstead.* Edited by J. S. L. Gilmour. 9 in. × 6 in. Pp. 167, pls. 26, maps 4. Hunt Botanical Library, Pittsburgh. (N.p.)

This is a most well presented and interesting publication. Mr. Gilmour's precise and careful comments show the similarity of the Kent flora in Johnson's time in the 1600s to the present day. Although some species have declined or become extinct since then, many which are still comparative rarities in the British flora can still be found where Johnson clearly records them in the Kent countryside. Credit must also be given to Canon C. E. Raven's translations of Johnson's 'Descriptio Itineris' so well reproduced in the facsimile plates.

A clear comparative map study enables the reader accurately to

## REVIEWS

trace the journeys and a little ecological detection confirms historical opinion on the nature of the North Kent landscape in the 1600s.

Conservationists should take comfort from the evidence of continuity that this earliest history of Kentish plants shows—in what must be one of the parts of the British Isles most altered in the course of the last 300 years.

R..M. FOULDS

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382  
© Kent Archaeological Society