

flint. It comes as a surprise to realize there is so little previous general literature on this subject and the author - an architect himself - has performed a major service (obviously a labour of love) in compiling this account. Flint has of course been used as a basic building material since at least Roman times, and its particular strengths and weaknesses have conditioned many of the characteristics of architecture in flint country, not least the famous round towers of East Anglian churches. Its other main architectural usage has been decorative rather than structural, with flint-knapping skills employed to the full, for example in creating the infilling of limestone emblems and tracery on late Medieval churches.

After brief introductions to the origins and nature of flint, to the constructional features of flint walling, and a rather hurried look at the chronology of building in flint, the author gets to the heart of his book - an extensive account of the varieties of flintwork to be encountered in the buildings of East Anglia, where flint architecture arguably reaches its British apogee. To structure his account the author has devised a nomenclature and classification of flintwork, using major categories from 'as-found flintwork' to 'flushwork', each with numerous sub-types. This not only provides a framework for the rest of the book, but it surely will become the basis for a standard terminology to be applied to architectural flintwork in Britain.

Since flint is virtually indestructible, it is the associated materials - mortar and weaker stones - used in constructing flint walling which create the problems for conservation. It is to be hoped that this book will foster increased recognition of the value of flint architecture as an outstanding example of local building tradition, both ecclesiastical and vernacular, and thus help ensure due attention from planning authorities and owners alike. Nor should flint architecture be thought of only in conservation terms, since there is scope for innovation in the use of flint from a new generation of architects in tune with the use of local materials.

The author has produced a readable yet authoritative work, which will educate anyone with an eye for architectural variation, and I would guess the reader would not even have to be a flint enthusiast to enjoy this book. Anyone who is, however, will be captivated immediately by the superb illustrations in the central colour section; there is something quite mesmerizing about the close-up details of different styles of flint walling, whether it be flint on its own or in conjunction with brick or other stones.

The book has a glossary, a general index, and an index of place-names, but a slight drawback is the absence of any maps or diagrams. The author shows little interest in the industrial or sociological aspects

of his subject, and there is hardly any investigation into the supply of flint raw material to the building trade, but these are minor complaints. Overall this is a fascinating book which flint enthusiasts should not be without.

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Hengeworld. Pitts, M. 2000. Century. London. 404 pages, 18 plates, 57 line-drawings. ISBN 0 7126 79545. HB £17.99.

Hengeworld is an enjoyable read. Mike Pitts succeeds in making the archaeological record at least as absorbing and exciting as para-archaeological fantasy, rendering the fantasy redundant. He tells the parallel stories of Wessex in the third and second millennia BC and of its investigation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries AD with pace, warmth and enthusiasm. In the process he manages to infuse life and personality into the protagonists of both, although this must have been a challenge in the case of some of the twentieth-century players.

An extensive, fragmented and sometimes forbidding literature has been digested into accessibility. Accurate and vivid vignettes cover easily communicated topics, such as the early history of aerial reconnaissance, and succeed impressively with more challenging and contentious ones, such as archaeoastronomy, the possibility that Neolithic carvings reflect the use of mind-altering drugs, or the source of the Stonehenge bluestones. The conclusions of the Stonehenge monograph are made available to many more readers than will ever tackle the family bible-sized source. The end product is as much the result of discussions, often relayed in the text, with numerous individuals, outside and inside archaeology, as it is of extensive reading. The significance of lithic technology comes to the fore - not surprisingly given that Mike Pitts was the founder of the Lithic Studies Society - in a consideration of how monumental stone and timber were worked: 'Technologically and conceptually, Stonehenge is an arrangement of absurdly massive stone tools', a reflection on the knapability of sarsen and bluestone.

Original research is woven into the fabric, notably in the form of excavations at the Sanctuary and the tracking-down and subsequent investigation of missing excavated skeletons. Original interpretation figures prominently too, often based on reconstructed experience of the monuments and on the metaphorical value of their components and the artefacts and food remains buried within them.

Sources and further information are to be found in almost 700 endnotes and an extensive bibliography.

Shortcomings are mainly stylistic. No one is allowed to go unlabelled or uncharacterised, even when the effect is forced and does not advance the story. Everyone is treated kindly, including the Goddess and her devotees. Nonetheless, the 'tiddlywink man' may find his description cringe-worthy, while the 'gentle, dapper man from Yorkshire with a penchant for cream-coloured suits' must find his splutter-worthy, especially as he is a Lancastrian. The style sometimes verges on the provincial journalese of the 1950s. One almost expects 'archaeologist Bill Startin' to resurface a few pages later as 'Carshalton-based orphaned archaeologist Bill Startin, 43'. The text overdoses on 'Ts; a one-third reduction in the first person would make the author an even more sympathetic companion.

For all this the work is a success. Its faults are a challenge to do better, whether to those who think they could tell the same story more effectively, to those who would like to see more palaeoenvironment and fewer megaliths, or to those who would like to do the same for the Lake District, the Fens or the west coast of Scotland.

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Mesolithic Northern England: environment, population and settlement. Spikins, P. 1999. BAR British Series 283. Archaeopress, Oxford. ISBN 1 84171 006 7. £24.00.

This book continues the admirable BAR tradition of publishing the products of PhD research. In this case Penny Spikins, then of Cambridge University, has set out to tackle the problems of 're-thinking the popular preconceptions and accepted means of interpreting Mesolithic activities', taking the archaeological and ecological record of northern England as her main scenario. The main title, however, is perhaps a little misleading in that the book does not set out to describe Mesolithic northern England in the traditional sense, with a detailed review and interpretation of the archaeological and environmental evidence. Readers of *Lithics* who might hope for site gazetteers, descriptions and analyses of chipped flint assemblages, raw material types and sources, lists of radiocarbon dates, site plans, faunal data etc., all nicely reviewed and reassessed with a dash of fresh field evidence, will be disappointed. Lithic evidence, for instance, is given passing mention only, with not a single stone tool even figured. Instead, the book takes the fashionable

view that previous understanding, in this case of Mesolithic adaptations, has been developed upon an inadequate database and flawed interpretations - which have become embedded as accepted wisdom. Much of the volume is therefore taken up with a painstaking deconstruction of our preconceptions and their basis, and is followed by an attempt, using a geographical analysis of modelled woodland resources, to develop a new approach to the problem. A particular target of the research is a challenge to the oft-accepted notion that change in Mesolithic subsistence patterns was a consequence of gradual growth of population.

Each chapter is supplied with a concise and helpful abstract and conclusion. The opening chapters set the scene, firstly by expounding briefly the basic premises for population increase as an explanation for Mesolithic adaptation, suggesting that these are faulty, and then going on to set out how the book is structured to address this problem. The second chapter tackles the existing archaeological evidence, concentrating upon spatial and temporal distributions of sites and radiocarbon dates and the interpretations that have been built upon these, at national, regional and local scales. When scrutinised in detail it is argued that most of the evidence upon which such interpretations are based is suspect. In the north of England, for instance, both the density and distribution of sites are seen to be at the mercy of a range of biasing factors - differential exposure of sites, incomplete excavation, collector bias, raw material constraints - to name but some of the more obvious. It is apparently no coincidence that the supposed Mesolithic preferences for south-facing slopes on plateau edges and valley heads with a wide view are just those same locations where sheep prefer to cluster, conveniently eroding the peat mineral interface where flints are to be found. The polarity between upland and lowland distributions of evidence, upon which so much subsequent interpretation has relied, is found to be false.

Having thus dismissed the archaeological record as flawed, the third chapter approaches the issue of Mesolithic subsistence by 'working up' from resources, that is by assessing the potential availability of useful plants and animals and trying to determine how this may have influenced subsistence. However, direct evidence for contemporary resource exploitation is extremely limited and interpretation has relied excessively upon ethnography to fill the gap. A review of the range of plant and animal resources potentially available during the Mesolithic follows, drawing attention to the shortcomings of subsistence models which depend too heavily on the exploitation of any particular resource. Whilst shellfish, red deer, and hazel nuts have each been fashionable in their turn in discussions of