

The Birth of a Borough: An Archaeological Study of Anglo-Saxon Stafford. By Martin Carver. Boydell. 2010. xiv + 176pp. £60.00.

This latest offering from Martin Carver, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at the University of York, is an archaeological monograph which synthesizes the results of a ten-year campaign of intensive archaeological research conducted in the midlands town of Stafford between 1975 and 1985. The book tells the story of Stafford, which was founded as a military stronghold by King Alfred's daughter Æthelflæd during the tenth century and became a thriving Late Saxon economic centre before being virtually abandoned in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest. The town only rose to prominence again in the late twelfth century.

The first chapter ('Questions') introduces the structure and ethos of the book, and sets out the research questions to which the book attempts to provide answers. Specifically, these concern the development of Stafford itself and its wider context as one of the series of fortified *burhs* founded across lowland England during the Late Saxon period. This is complemented by chapter 2 ('Digging up Stafford'), which provides a history of the archaeological investigations undertaken in Stafford and discusses the rationale behind their execution. Throughout the book the author synthesizes a considerable amount of archaeological data resulting from these investigations, the vast majority of which has been made available online via the Archaeology Data Service, to which the reader is often referred. Chapter 3 ('Seven Windows on Early Stratford') provides more detailed summaries of the seven principal archaeological excavations that were undertaken within the town during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These summaries are extensively illustrated with original photographs and site plans. The chapter concludes with a brief synthetic chronology of the development of Stafford derived from the results of these archaeological excavations.

Chapter 4 ('Æthelflæd's Town') synthesizes the archaeological evidence for the Iron Age and Roman use of the site prior to the establishment of the *burh* in the tenth century, and provides a detailed analysis of the character, form and function of the *burh* itself, which the author argues was founded in the Roman image and run along Roman lines. Subjects covered include the archaeological evidence for cereal processing, the consumption of animals, the early phases of St Bertelin's church, the Stafford mint, and, especially, the Stafford-ware pottery industry, the latter being extensively illustrated. The story of Stafford continues in chapter 5 ('Aftermath'), which discusses the effect of the Norman Conquest on the Anglo-Saxon *burh*, after which a castle was founded within the town while other parts of the town were abandoned and fell into disuse. The town appears to have experienced an economic revival from the late twelfth to the fourteenth century, evidenced by extensive medieval occupation evidence and a resurgence in pottery production, among other indicators.

The final chapter ('Anglo-Saxon Stafford in Context') takes the evidence for the *burh* presented in the previous chapters and places it at the centre of a detailed and enlightening discussion of the wider origins and use of the fortified *burh* in Anglo-Saxon Mercia and Wessex. Particular regard is paid to two hypotheses about the founding of the *burhs* – that they were constructed on existing royal foundations or that they were focused on existing ecclesiastical foundations – but these sites, Carver concludes, were chosen for strategic

reasons and were deliberately modelled on Roman fortifications, their occupants even going so far as to mint coins and produce Roman-style pottery.

This book is very well produced, comprising an A4 hardback lavishly illustrated throughout with line drawings and black-and-white photographs, although the four colour plates that open the volume really only serve to draw attention to the lack of colour in the rest of the book. In general, all the illustrations are reproduced to a very high standard, although some of the labels are difficult to read due to the scale at which they are presented. While many of the archaeological plans and diagrams are reproduced directly from the original site archives, some are now showing their age and the overall presentation of the book may have benefited from their being redrawn in a consistent house style.

This book is one of several recent volumes that have effectively and successfully drawn together and synthesized a number of discrete excavations and used them to tell the story of a single town or settlement. The author is to be commended for ensuring that these important results have been brought to publication and for ensuring that the substantive complementary site archive has been made freely available online. Although arguably the contents of the book will primarily be of interest to those concerned with Stafford itself, there is a wider relevance here for those interested in the development of English urban centres in general and the concluding discussion of the origins and function of the *burhs* makes this volume of great relevance to Anglo-Saxon scholars everywhere.

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***Sanctuary and Crime in the Middle Ages, 400–1500.* By Karl Shoemaker.** Fordham University Press. 2011. xiv + 269pp. £56.50/\$65.00.

A right of sanctuary attached to Christian churches, which protected any wrongdoer or suspected wrongdoer who had managed to enter a church or the consecrated land surrounding it from being forcibly removed and provided him or her with effective immunity from capital or corporal punishment, is first clearly visible in the late fourth century in Roman imperial edicts which restricted some claims to sanctuary but implicitly recognized others. Thereafter, the right seems to have been generally accepted in both secular and ecclesiastical law throughout western Europe for over a millennium. Its end came relatively quickly during the century after 1500, with the effective withdrawal of its legal recognition in both Protestant England and Catholic France during the first half of the century, and what amounted in practice to a papal abolition of the entitlement under canon law in 1597.

Although there have been a number of recent and not so recent papers and a number of unpublished doctoral theses on aspects of sanctuary law, it has been over a century since the last general monograph on the subject appeared in English. This was Norman Trenholme's *The Right of Sanctuary in England: A Study in Institutional History*, which appeared in 1903 and whose main focus was on the history of sanctuary in England. So Karl Shoemaker's monograph deserves a welcome from historians as a brave attempt at providing a modern account of this phenomenon and all within the relatively brief space of under 200 pages, plus just over fifty pages of endnotes.

Saxon place names. Staffordshire Hoard. The Lindisfarne Gospels This illuminated manuscript is a superb example of art from the Dark Ages (proving that the Dark Ages weren't pitch black). The Gospels were created around 700 A.D. by Eadfrith, bishop of Lindisfarne monastery on Holy Island (Northumberland).
The haul, in archaeological terms, was staggering. Inside the hull of a wooden ship buried beneath an oval mound were the war gear and treasures of a Saxon leader, perhaps a "bretwalda" or king of Suffolk. No skeleton was found; apparently it had been destroyed by the acidic soil.
Anglo-Saxon Place Names And to polish off this eccentric collection of Anglo-Saxon remains, here's something you can have some fun with: place names. Anglo-Saxon disc brooches in the Ashmolean Museum, from archaeological sites in Sarre (left) and Monkton (Monkton) in Kent. Photograph © Ethan Doyle White.
The symbol of the cross played a major role in the Christian conversion and the subsequent emergence of a unified English kingdom. Today, few of the great stone crosses of the Anglo-Saxon period survive, but one of the finest still stands in the churchyard of St. Cuthbert's Church in Cumbria, being ornately decorated with images, patterns, and runic inscriptions. Visit St Cuthbert's Church >>. There is more!
These ten sites and museums are just a start – there are many other sites, churches and museums that have other examples of Early Medieval material culture.