

REVIEWS

The reviews in the Journal are published as the views of those who write them. They are accepted by the Journal in good faith as accurate and honest expressions of opinion. In view of the large amount of correspondence that may ensue, we invite those who wish to do so to communicate with the reviewer direct.

doi:10.1017/S0003581516000251

Devonshire Marbles: their geology, history and uses (2 vols). By GORDON WALKDEN. 210mm. Pp 232, 484, many ills (chiefly col). Geologists' Association Guide 72, London, 2015. ISBNs 97809000717765; 97809000717819. £12 per vol (pbk).

The West Country (Devon and Cornwall), geologically known as Cornubia, has provided raw materials for millennia: tin, copper, arsenic, perhaps even the gold for Irish torcs and German star discs. More recently it provided the raw ore for Marie Curie's discovery of radium, kaolin for top-shelf glossy magazines, tungsten for munitions and, for about 120 years, until the First World War, the finest English decorative marbles. These far outranked their more monochrome Derbyshire rivals and were employed in facings for religious and secular buildings, for ornamenting table tops and fire surrounds, as paperweights, ink stands and even worn as bracelets and ear-rings.

Larger pieces – columns, wall panels – were hewn from more than twenty quarries, including Ipplepen, Petit Tor, Ashburton and Kitley, but, initially, smaller items were collected as water-worn, rounded cobbles and boulders from local Devon beaches, transformed by the 'madrepore workers' and sold in seaside souvenir shops (even Prince Albert came to browse and buy). These beach collectors and skilled artisans were unknowingly following a many millennia-long tradition, for the first example of this Devonshire beach bling is a drilled mace-head found among gold and amber within the Early Bronze Age, exceedingly 'well-furnished' grave at Bush Barrow, close to Stonehenge. Although not noted in the present volumes this striking, polished petrified sponge is sure to make any later edition.

Volume 1, 'Understanding the Marbles', gives the full history of the marbles. The first half of the book gives a broad introduction to the marbles as rocks and then as artefacts, followed by a history of the Devon marble industry, its

masons and marble masters and its rise, decline and near total extinction. Two major chapters describe and illustrate portable Devonshire marble items, including all the known marble-top tables plus examples of smaller, turned or inlaid table-top items and jewellery. Splendid as many of these are, most (the table tops are breath-taking) cannot match the exuberance of Devonshire marble when used to decorate public buildings either in combinations of local varieties or with Continental marbles or even other very different rock types. Time and again it is shown that these are world-class ornamental stones, just lacking the pure white variety of Carrara. The illustrations, of the very, very highest quality and reproduction, are annotated so that every piece of inlay, pilaster, fillet and dado panel is identified.

The second half is probably not for the faint-hearted. The highly complex geology (used here with its correct meaning, namely, the sum of all their spatial and temporal geological attributes and not as an affected way for archaeologists to say 'rock') of the marbles from the initial warm water reef with its corals, sponges and encrinites, subsequent burial, deformation and chemical alteration, to recent uplift and exploitation, is exhaustively examined and illuminated (rather relentlessly, so exhausting) to give a magnificent record of heroic rocks that have lived through many interesting times. Professor Walkden has used all his skill and experience to unravel the lives of these carbonate rocks and it will be of service to geologists and rock hunters for decades to come.

Volume 2, 'Recognising the Marbles', gives a series of field-trip guides and could be read, with a much-diminished understanding, without volume 1. The present-day *in situ* exposures of the Devonshire marbles are described in detail accompanied by more very high-quality colour photographs, although experience suggests that the complex geological history of these rocks is such that a human would be needed to expose and explain everything. But the itineraries (and many warnings to be careful) also illustrate

how, despite being scheduled and legally protected, the outcrops are neglected, requiring trips along unkempt bridle paths, into corners of industrial estates and scrambles down cliffs onto unsavoury beaches. There is even a trip to a gold mine as a bonus.

After a short identification guide to the major marbles (there is a later guide illustrating the major fossils found in the marbles) most of the book gives 'a descriptive and visual guide to the 34 Devonshire buildings and sites of importance' (all in England), including cathedrals (Plymouth, Exeter), national museums (Natural History Museum/Geological Museum, Fitzwilliam) and High Victorian town halls (Manchester), Oxbridge colleges, plus the Brompton Oratory and the less expected Todmorden Unitarian Church and Birmingham Grand Hotel. Geological guides to the facing stones in British towns and cities have become increasingly fashionable, but few can be as lavish as this. However, even within these high-status buildings there are signs of damage/neglect through changing artistic fashions or impoverished-enforced, poor maintenance. But, as it intends, the volume goads the reader to go out and use it and perhaps then lobby and fight for the buildings.

It would miss the point were only geologists to benefit from Professor Walkden's monumental efforts, efforts that are truly pan-marmorial (*sic*), for he exhorts us to enjoy, love and nurture these English marble marvels, to give generously to maintain the buildings and to rediscover smaller objects that are unrecognised in collections and auction houses. These two books speak volumes as to why, now that the marble quarries and beaches are largely barren, we should ensure that what remains is uncovered, recovered and cherished. Thinking of doing anything other than that, we really would be losing our marbles.

ROBERT IXER

doi:10.1017/S0003581516000044

Trends in Biological Anthropology. Volume 1. By KARINA GERDAU-RADONIĆ and KATHLEEN MCSWEENEY, 297mm. Pp 160, b&w ills. Oxbow Books, for the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology, Oxford, 2015. ISBN 9781782978367. £49.95 (pbk).

Trends in Biological Anthropology is a new series that aims to report on new multidisciplinary

research in biological anthropology, based on presentations made at the annual conferences of the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology (BABA0). The first volume, based on the 2011 and 2012 conferences, captures very well the rich diversity of research in the field.

The papers are grouped thematically, and they cover subjects as diverse as primatology, osteoarchaeology, dental anthropology, palaeopathology, three-dimensional modelling, healthy eating and forensics. This is an interesting mix that embraces methodological approaches, palaeopathological case studies, analysis of disarticulated remains from Worcester infirmary, the significance of the definition of 'perimortem' in forensics and a splendid Wellcome-funded public engagement programme, 'You Are What You Ate', encouraging healthy eating based on information recorded from medieval and early modern period skeletons.

The depth and breadth of the research clearly demonstrates the different techniques, applications and approaches used for studies and engagement in biological anthropology today. Such investigative studies highlight the innovation that characterises the discipline of biological anthropology as it develops and strives to achieve valid interpretations. As such, *Trends* promises to be a valuable resource for learning and research in biological anthropology; volume 1 is a very good start and a benchmark for the future volumes being of an equally high standard.

JELENA BEKVALAC

doi:10.1017/S0003581516000263

Beastly Questions: animal answers to archaeological issues. By NAOMI SYKES. 240mm. Pp xvi + 221, 34 b&w ills. Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2014. ISBN 9781472506757. £70 (hbk).

It is disconcerting to read a book that starts with a declaration of how bored the author is with her discipline. But this is the rather unconventional introduction to what becomes a powerful argument as to how much more valuable zooarchaeology could be if its proponents did more to interpret the datasets they produce. Zooarchaeologists are in a position to shed much more light on human-animal interactions, and these, Sykes argues, are a key source of