and recording the interventions made between 1997 and 2003. In all this there is just one issue that sits uneasily in the text. While he was sacrist, Robert of Lindsey whitewashed the 'volsuras' in the retrochoir (*fecit dealbare volsuras in retro choro*). For Don Mackreth this probably referred to the intended nave vault, and might even be taken as evidence it was built. 'Volsura' can be translated as 'vault', though it is cognate with the modern French 'voussure', or voussoir. It could refer to ribs or arches. In so far as there is one vault at Peterborough which was unquestionably built – a rib vault over the principal apse, to the east of the presbytery and high altar – was this not the vault, or the vault ribs and enclosing arch, that were whitewashed by Robert of Lindsey? 'Retrochoir' is not a medieval term, but 'retro' is generally understood as signifying behind, that is to the east, of the choir.

It is excellent to have this material gathered into a single volume, and vastly more helpful than finding it effectively buried in a series of separate, specialist reports. MOLA and the editors are to be commended for their patience and good sense in bringing it together and producing such a high-quality volume.

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Tower Studies, 1 & 2. A House that Thieves might Knock at. Proceedings of the 2010 Stirling and 2011 Dundee Conferences on 'The Tower as Lordly Residence' and 'The Tower and the Household'. Edited by RICHARD ORAM. 255mm. Pp xvi + 304, 143 ills (94 col), 15 tables. Shaun Tyas, Donington, 2015. ISBN 9781907730405. £45 (hbk).

Part monograph, part themed journal, this book of essays represents the published proceedings of the first two conferences held under the auspices of Turris, a newly formed international network of those who share an interest in the medieval and later tower in all its forms and contexts. The first conference, organised by Richard Oram at Stirling in 2010, took as its theme the tower as lordly residence, and the second, hosted by the late Charles McKean at Dundee in 2011, was on the tower and the household. Of the papers presented at the conferences, sixteen are published here, nine from the first event, seven from the second, and almost two-thirds of them relate to Scotland and Ireland, with five essays apiece. Of the other six, two relate to the Netherlands, two to England (one against a Norman and Angevin background) and one each to Wales and Poland.

Transcending modern geographical boundaries, however, one of the principal values of an international compilation of this kind is the refreshing juxtaposition of different bodies of historical and material evidence and of different approaches to their study. Across many countries, the towers themselves highlight many common and now-familiar themes, such as their conveyance of messages of ambition, authority, status and belief, or an apparent lack of effective means of defence. They also exhibit a number of contrasts, not least in their physical contexts, which range from settings that are relatively isolated to those that are intensely nucleated. Alongside more traditional approaches to understanding their built form, fabric and history, relatively new techniques are demonstrated here to interesting effect. In relation to Irish towers, for example, Gillian Eadie uses spatial analysis to address assumptions about social use and segregation, while Rory Sherlock applies to their origins and dating the results of radiocarbon dating of hazel rods used in wickerwork centring.

For these reasons it matters less than it otherwise would that about half of the contributions fit within their conference themes only very loosely, some scarcely at all. The reader is thus best advised to regard much of this collection as a miscellany, and to remain mindful that it is a prelude to an entire series. Other themes hinted at or explicitly referred to are already in gestation as *Tower Studies* 3, 4 and 5, which deal, respectively, with urban towers (from Cracow in 2012), the 'tower house' (Amersfoort, 2013) and the tower as status symbol (Newcastle, 2014). Given the strong likelihood that they will complement this first volume and each other, it would be premature and pointless to draw attention to some obvious gaps and imbalances in the coverage provided by *Tower Studies 1 & 2*; and, while simply noting differences over what, for example, constitutes a 'fortified house' in Ireland and Scotland, further comment on terminology will best be deferred until after the appearance of *Tower Studies* 4, which looks as though it will be bravely concerning itself with definitions.

However, as the first volume of a series, it is entirely appropriate to add a few remarks about standards of presentation and about tone. The volume is amply illustrated, much of it in colour,

and some essays, most notably those by John Kenyon on the Great Tower at Raglan Castle and Pamela Marshall on Angevin donjons, blend admirably with their accompanying sequences of photographs and drawings. Unfortunately, such easy-to-follow models of lucidity are the exception rather than the rule, and one is too often conscious that the illustrations do not adequately support the text. Lengthy detailed narratives describing features and complex layouts, such as that of Doune Castle, are especially difficult to comprehend, even by those familiar with the sites in question, largely because the occasional general view fails to provide anything more than pictorial effect. It is to be hoped that the rest of the series will find space for more graphic illustrations, clearly annotated, and for more maps. Four smallish maps, one a minor inset, do not adequately assist international understanding of the tower phenomenon in terms of place and geographical distribution.

Some readers may also find difficulty with the sententious and strenuously personal tone that characterises a number of passages in this volume, mainly those which point to the alleged many villains and few heroes of Scottish castle studies, a sadly conspicuous trait in the late Charles McKean's discursive piece on 'A Taxonomy of Towers'. While this volume and the series has clearly been driven by a strong desire to inject into the subject the results of fresh research and thinking over the past three decades, earlier generations of distinguished Scottish castellologists, such as William Douglas Simpson and Stewart Cruden, still deserve credit for being rather more than easy targets, having laid foundations in intellectual climates very different from our own. In marked contrast to this treatment, there is a display of literary courtesy and respect accorded the late Arnold Taylor over his now-outmoded verdict on later alterations to Raglan Great Tower. As always, the jury of the readership will decide what is new on the basis of the hard evidence, not on its mediation via new assertions and interpretations in place of old ones.

There are also disturbing hints that 'new' is being equated with 'final word'. Take, for example, the question as to whether the numerous tower houses of Ireland and Scotland reflect social turbulence and insecurity or prosperity and stability, a question that has engaged scholars for decades. While this reviewer has long been a publicist for the prosperity / stability camp, he is aware that much depends on perceptions of what constitutes defence and security, and would thus be among the last to agree with one of the contributors that 'an informed investigation into the role of defence in tower houses will … go some way in providing an end of this debate'. Turris has much potential to occupy a significant niche in European castle studies as long as it recognises that the historiography of this subject is a cumulative and open-ended, not a finite, process.

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Wigmore Castle, North Herefordshire: excavations 1996 and 1998. By STEPHANIE RÁTKAI. 297mm. Pp xi + 254, 240 figs, 11 pls (col). Soc Medieval Archaeol Monogr 34, London, 2015. ISBN 9781909662193. £30 (pbk).

Wigmore in north-west Herefordshire was one of the major castles of the Middle Ages in the Welsh Marches, home to the great Mortimer family, a family that features heavily in medieval annals and today has its own society. Towards the end of the last century, concern was being expressed regarding the state of the ruins, and in 1995 English Heritage (EH) took it into Guardianship.

The problem then was what to do in terms of conservation of what amounts to a large castle. The decision to conserve 'as found' attracted much discussion in heritage circles and Glyn Coppack of EH wrote a number of papers concerning the project, although two are not included in this volume. The result was a consolidated monument, but still sitting among the fauna and flora of its environs. The excavations of 1996 and 1998 in the inner bailey were undertaken before conservation began; they were against the east tower and the south-west curtain wall, between the south and south-west towers. The areas were small, and the fact that in one place archaeological deposits were more than 8m deep meant that planning and photography were not an easy task.

Nevertheless, although the author modestly states that the results are what might be expected from any Marches castle excavation, they did confirm the longevity of the stronghold, and hint at the richness that might be expected should Wigmore be the subject of a major research project. Traces of the original earth and timber castle were uncovered, including a timber building that may have been the kitchen, producing a wealth of faunal remains (ninety-three figures illustrate this section).