

strengths of the volume is that considerable care has been taken to ensure that all of the numbering and cross-referencing between the text and the figures is clear, so that the artefacts and samples discussed later in the volume can be traced back to locations on the plans.

The largest section of the book, written by a comprehensive range of specialists and richly illustrated, focuses on the artefacts. Here, the level of discussion varies by material and author, with some sections focusing on the description and interpretation of individual objects, while others provide a broader discussion of the material and its significance. In part, this is due to the nature of the objects being discussed, with the more abundant finds types, such as pottery, facilitating deeper investigation.

The following section focuses on the results from a wide range of analyses undertaken on the bone and environmental samples, providing additional detail in support of the descriptions of the site excavations introduced in the first main section. Analyses by the specialists include human bone from a variety of inhumation, cremation and disarticulated contexts, animal bone, plant macrofossils, pollen and molluscs. As with the preceding section on the artefacts, the level of detail provided largely reflects the volume of evidence, but also the levels of preservation. Even though the condition of bone was generally moderate or good, providing larger quantities of evidence, soil conditions meant that organic material and environmental remains were less well preserved.

In the introduction to the book it is explained that, given the quantity of the data that emerged from the project, the two main sections on artefacts and analyses are structured to focus on ‘specialist discussions and conclusions’ with only “sufficient weight of supporting data to allow judgements about the basis of those conclusions” (p. 2); the remaining data are contained within the site archive. Defining what is *sufficient* can be challenging, but, in the case of this volume, the level of information provided is mostly appropriate and, for the majority of readers, will indeed be sufficient. For specialists, the level of detail provided will give a good indication of the potential of the samples and hence whether it is worth accessing the archive for more detail, yet here the project might have benefited from accessible digital archiving.

The discussion and conclusions that complete the book draw together the themes from the preceding sections by period and theme, as well as in terms of significance. While the excavated evidence extends from the earlier Mesolithic through to the medieval period, particularly noteworthy discoveries include an early Mesolithic flint-working site, the possible Bronze Age and Iron Age barrows near Sproatley and the extensive Iron Age settlements. In relation to this later prehistoric landscape, both the density and the spatial distributions of settlement along the route of the pipeline are intriguing and add to our understanding of lowland activity at this time. Similarly, the detailed treatment of certain features, such as the later prehistoric ring gullies, draws attention to some specific challenges of interpretation.

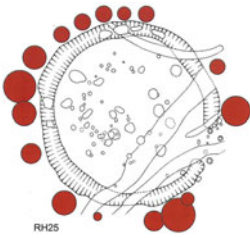
Much of the discussion explores the evidence within its wider regional context, examining how the results from the project have augmented previous research and knowledge. Due caution is expressed in relation to the question of how representative the results from this transect might be of past cultural activity across the wider Holderness landscape. A route that by necessity bypasses modern settlements, for example, probably explains the relative absence of medieval sites. The discussion also relates the material to environmental factors such as wetlands and relative sea-level change, across the wider region including the Wolds and the Vale of York. Given the importance of some of these discoveries, perhaps even more could have been made of their wider national and international significance. Overall, however, this volume is a valuable contribution to our understanding of Holderness, its regional context and of lowland archaeology more generally.

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CHRISTOPHER EVANS, GRAHAME APPLEBY &
SAM LUCY. *Lives in land—Mucking excavations by
Margaret and Tom Jones 1965–78. Prehistory context
and summary*. 2015. xvii+566 pages, numerous
colour and b&cw illustrations. Oxford & Havertown
(PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78570-148-1 hardback £40.

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Rescue archaeology takes different forms, including excavating sites threatened with destruction and teasing publications out from archives and finds long abandoned as

unpublishable. The excavations at Mucking fall into the former category; this volume into the latter. Mucking was an epic excavation of an enormous cluster of archaeological features on a terrace above the Thames in Essex, at the point at which the river widens into an estuary. Directed by Margaret Jones, with help from her husband Tom, between 1965 and 1978, and funded scantily by the Ministry of Works, the site had evidence from the Mesolithic to the post-medieval period, with its main occupation between the late Bronze Age and the early Anglo-Saxon period (c. 900 BC to AD 800). This was rescue archaeology in advance of quarrying, where the diggers often had little time to excavate and record before the draglines destroyed everything. Following the Second World War, development in the UK took off: suburban areas expanded, roads were built and sand, gravel and stone were quarried at an increasing rate. Archaeological regulation was not in place to ensure the proper excavation and analysis of the mass of evidence under threat prior to a change of legislation in 1990 (so-called PPG-16), which required developers to pay for the investigation of the archaeological sites they threatened—planning guidance that is being weakened by current legislation.

Mucking was exemplary of contemporary archaeology, but on a giant scale. It was discovered through an aerial photograph of Kenneth St Joseph in 1961 that highlighted the double rings (thought to be a Neolithic henge) overlain by rectangular enclosures and a mass of other features, which also included the encroachment of gravel-working on the site. The excavations were open area, following stripping of the topsoil (and possibly some of the archaeological features) by machine, and they eventually covered 18ha: the largest excavation at the time in Britain. As Evans *et al.* note, the number of features excavated was prodigious:

eight round barrows and a Bronze Age fieldsystem, more than 110 Late Bronze Age/Iron Age roundhouses were recovered

and, interred within formal cemeteries associated with settlement compounds, were some 170 burials of the Roman period. Perhaps most important was the scale of its Anglo-Saxon occupation; accompanied by at least 57 post-built 'halls', more than 200 sunken-featured buildings or Grubenhäuser were excavated, as were also some 800 contemporary burials! (p. 1).

The excavation also suffered from a particular reputation—even by the spartan digging conditions of the time, Mucking was seen to be tough. I never dug there, but in the 1970s heard tales of extreme cold, bad food and eccentricity. As time elapsed after the excavation, another reputation developed—this was a site with a byzantine archive, a huge mountain of finds and a difficult, rather old-fashioned director, all of which militated against proper publication. In fact, this last aspect was not true, as publications did come out, although not by Margaret Jones herself (Clark 1993; Hamerow 1993; Hirst & Clark 2009). The volume reviewed here covers the prehistoric features and finds (but with some discussion of later elements); a second volume, on the Roman aspects of Mucking, has subsequently appeared (Lucy & Evans 2016) and will be the subject of separate review.

This present volume has a dual purpose. Its main aim is to present and make sense of the prehistoric archaeology, but it also provides a historiography of Mucking together with an analysis of what was, and what was not, done during excavation and analysis. The 1960s and 1970s developed new modes of open-area excavation, on the gravels of the major rivers for instance, demonstrating a mass of settlement that counter-balanced the previous emphasis on the uplands, principally the Wessex chalk. Such techniques were also used on complex urban stratigraphy in Winchester, London and elsewhere. As this volume explores, large excavations often outstripped the ability to deal with plans, sections and finds when it came to post-excavation, and here too Mucking is paradigmatic. The advent of desktop computers, database packages and GIS means that today we can handle the spatial, temporal and finds information from sites such as Mucking. There have also been important procedural advances in post-excavation—we now appreciate the sequence that analysis can take and how to generate a narrative (although this may become too routine). The Mucking work also aimed at a completeness of recovery, analysis and archiving, which slowed

progress. The picture emerges here of a formidable and determined site director (whose reputation was tinged by a degree of misogyny), determined to rescue a site at considerable personal cost and discomfort, but who was ill-equipped to make sense of her findings once digging stopped. (As an aside on personalities, it is interesting how little emerges about her husband—“Tom was simply furtive” (p. 113), two ex-diggers note.) Evans *et al.* recognise the benefits of higher rates of recovery in the field compared with today’s customary low sampling percentages, but also wonder why more sampling was not countenanced in the finds’ analysis, or more expedient ways adopted for archiving.

This volume and its Roman-period companion ruin Mucking’s reputation as an unpublishable site. It is a remarkable achievement, making available a broad and fascinating site narrative, some of which has never been glimpsed before. The structure of the book follows the site chronology, so that after an introduction to Mucking, its archive and the current work in Chapter 1, we are taken through the Mesolithic to middle Bronze Age field system in Chapter 2, the late Bronze Age ringworks of the South Rings in Chapter 3, the earlier and later Iron Age in Chapters 4 and 5, with a summing up of the results including the Roman to post-medieval periods in Chapter 6 (with an excellent piece by Tim Champion situating Mucking in the prehistories and early histories of Essex and Kent).

This is an amazing volume and a great credit to Evans and the Cambridge Archaeological Unit. As such, any criticism seems carping. I would, however, have liked a clearer and more comprehensive account of the methods adopted in tackling the archive and the finds—there are three sections on project framing which help us to understand what was done, but it is hard to be certain about the methods used. A clearer statement of methodology would have allowed for greater evaluation of the results and provided a model for what can be done on other similar sites. It seems, however, that the watchword was expedience—they did not worry about the mass of features of uncertain date or type, nor did they attempt mass analysis of finds; Matt Brudenell did undertake a reassessment of some of the late prehistoric pottery from drawings and plotted distributions, but generally, reports from older analyses have been used. The acidic soils at Mucking explain the relative lack of human and animal bones, but finds of other types are abundant.

In the final chapter, Evans wrestles with important issues of what the archaeology represents, comparing artefact densities with other sites nearby and in the Fens to gain a sense of the high relative density of occupation at Mucking, especially from the late Iron Age to early medieval periods. The middle Bronze Age saw the establishment of a field system, but little in the way of habitation (as is often the case), raising questions of what and where the community lived. The South Rings complex was formed of concentric ditches (and possibly banks), with a structure in the middle (a house or a barrow) and much evidence of metal working, salt making and textile manufacture. This concentrated evidence was followed in the earlier Iron Age by more dispersed occupation in round houses, and for the first time, the nature of the community becomes clearer. One of the great outcomes of the re-analysis has resulted in a new understanding of the late Iron Age evidence, located around a central area that the team has named ‘The Plaza’. This was a relatively empty area bounded by lines of posts, two rows of square barrows (the northern set associated with cremations) and a row of granaries (some of monumental size) that may have followed a road. Not all of these elements fit together perfectly, suggesting some evolution over time, but they also form the broad ground plan for the early Roman enclosures, one of the most obvious sets of continuities on the site.

This brief description gives only a hint of the richness of the site and of the new findings presented in *Lives in land*, which themselves could be expanded upon and nuanced by further analysis. The work of the Joneses at Mucking might be seen as a failure, but this volume makes abundantly clear how much good work was done in difficult conditions and the importance of the material today. We can also be grateful to Evans and his team for so much recuperative effort to produce a volume that can be read and reread.

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LUCY, S. & C.J. EVANS. 2016. *Romano-British settlement and cemeteries at Mucking: excavations by Margaret and Tom Jones, 1965–1978*. Oxford & Philadelphia (PA): Oxbow.

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KEITH RAY & IAN BAPTY. *Offa's Dyke: landscape & hegemony in eighth-century Britain*. 2016. xvi+448 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Oxford & Havertown (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-90511-935-6 paperback £29.95.



There is something for everybody in Keith Ray and Ian Bapty's *Offa's Dyke*. Archaeologists will appreciate the site descriptions and the updates on the last decades of survey and

excavation. The extensive discussion of coins, charters and narratives, written long after king Offa of Mercia died in AD 796, and the insertion of the Dyke in a Frankish, Carolingian context, will cheer early medieval historians. Avid hikers too will find much of interest between the book's covers, beginning with the careful maps and the topographical index, although at 448 heavy-paper pages, it is a bigger and heavier volume than most will want to carry in their rucksacks. Aesthetes will admire the hundreds of fine photographs and drawings of landscapes and artefacts, meticulously labelled and cunningly worked into the text—a model of modern publishing craft. And of course Offa's Dyke enthusiasts will be delighted to find so much previous scholarship on the object of their enthusiasm gathered together, summed up and assessed fairly. The authors refer often to Sir Cyril Fox (died 1967) and his pioneering labours to understand and publicise the Dyke. A remarkable 1924 portrait of the great archaeologist, grinning and cradling a human cranium, is reproduced at the book's outset, alongside the authors' dedication of the book to his memory. Yet ironically, Ray and Bapty may have rendered Fox's classic *Offa's Dyke* (1955) superfluous, so compendious is their

account of the monument and the investigations of it.

Offa's Dyke is well organised. It has three sections, one on the available evidence and previous study of it (Chapters 1–3), one on how the Dyke was built and managed (Chapters 4–6), and one on the historical context, within which Ray and Bapty would like to see the Dyke reappraised (Chapters 7–9). All three sections are somewhat plodding as a result of the aspiration to be all-inclusive, although the thick description of the current state of the Dyke in the first section is the densest (Chapter 1). But as with the subsequent description of what people have thought about the Dyke over the past millennium (Chapter 2), that account—in effect a linear field survey—is valuable. It is the basis for Ray and Bapty's claim that the Dyke is longer and more complete than most modern researchers allow, and that features previously thought to be signs of haste or incompetence actually serve to improve visibility from the Dyke and provide a more imposing 'stance' for anyone who contemplated it from the west (the Welsh). That is the thrust of Chapters 4–6, wherein the authors present what they consider to be their "most potentially significant" (p. 165) contribution to Offa's Dyke Studies, namely the observation that the Dyke was very sensitively placed in the landscape (they call it "adjusted-segmented construction", p. 203). In the last three chapters of *Offa's Dyke*, Ray and Bapty develop their maximalist position on the nature and purpose of the Dyke, suggesting that it was both a symptom and an instrument of Mercia's "hegemony" (p. 333; they admit that word is not just murky but "mercurial", p. 103). The most original aspect in their optimistic assessment of eighth- and ninth-century state activity in Mercia is their insistence on the importance of Offa's successor, Coenwulf, for the history of the Dyke.

Ray and Bapty's *Offa's Dyke* reflects the ongoing scholarly rehabilitation of the post-classical period. Debates between those who consider the centuries after Rome's fall positively ('continuists') and those who deem the Dark Ages a major retrogression ('catastrophists') are muted now; a more stable and wealthy early Middle Ages tends to prevail. The capable Mercian regime that, in Ray and Bapty's opinion, confidently designed and built a massive earthwork—at Ruabon, the bank can be 10m higher than the ditch floor—from Flintshire to Gloucestershire is a product of this historiographical