

in the tradition of classical archaeology, focusing on the city as a collection of successful elite monuments.

References

- GEERTZ, C. 1980. *Negara: the theatre state in nineteenth-century Bali*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.
- SAUVAGET, J. 1934. Le plan de Laodicée-sur-Mer. *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 4: 81–116.

LUCY GRIG
School of History, Classics & Archaeology
Edinburgh University, UK
(Email: lucy.grig@ed.ac.uk)

- SAMANTHA PAUL & JOHN HUNT. *Evolution of a community: the colonization of a clay inland landscape*. 2015. xii+245 pages, 67 colour and b&w illustrations, and 39 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78491-086-0 paperback £45.



This volume brings together the results of seven excavations around the modern village of Longstanton, north-west of Cambridge, undertaken between 1995 and 2011. Over this 16-year period, a desk-based assessment, seven excavations (preceded by six evaluations) and three geophysical surveys were carried out. They revealed continuous agricultural activity

across a gravel ridge at the interface between clay uplands and low-lying, floodable meadow from the late Neolithic to the seventeenth century. Together, they offer the rare opportunity to explore the origins and development across the *longue durée* of a landscape that is—unlike those around the deserted medieval settlements of (say) Caldecote (Hertfordshire), Goltho (Lincolnshire) or Wharram Percy (Yorkshire)—still vibrantly occupied.

© Antiquity Publications Ltd, 2015

There are five substantive sections: an Introduction; Part 1 (Chapters 2–5, in 52 pages), covering the prehistoric and Roman periods; Part 2 (Chapter 6–12, in 104 pages), reporting on evidence for the Anglo-Saxon and medieval centuries; a chapter on ‘Conclusions’; and ten technical appendices. The figures showing the results for each period are particularly to be commended. Each is based on an underlying plan in which all excavated features are shown in light grey, on which are superimposed those associated with each (colour-coded) period. Comparison of the landscapes of the Neolithic or Bronze Age with those of, for instance, the Roman or medieval periods is thus straightforward.

The archaeological excavations make two serious and important contributions to national scholarship and debates concerning the origins and development of the Anglo-Saxon and medieval landscape. Those contributions are, first, the degree to which the introduction of medieval ‘Midland’ open fields (in which all aspects of arable layout, distributions of holdings and sequences of cropping, including a fallow period, were collectively managed as a unified system) ignored or perpetuated earlier field layouts; and, second, the firm identification of the period that saw the emergence of such field systems.

The Longstanton excavations are unusual in offering the opportunity to trace the history of agriculture continuously across at least four millennia. In doing this, they make a significant contribution to questions about the degree to which the alignment of agricultural boundaries of one period perpetuated or ignored earlier ones, a debate that is especially intense in relation to the introduction of ‘Midland’ open fields. No evidence of continuity was found in field survey across the whole of Northamptonshire, where open fields were concluded to have been laid out on completely new alignments; yet other results from across England have indicated that continuity of layout into medieval open fields was more common than not. The excavations at Longstanton conclusively demonstrate that almost all field boundaries there, whether Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval or seventeenth century, generally followed a framework of alignments that had its origin in the later Bronze Age, perhaps even in the late Neolithic. The underlying ‘grain’ of the land can thus be said to have persisted across at least 4000 years.

The second major contribution of the Longstanton excavations concerns the origins of ‘Midland’ open-field systems, for which definitive archaeological

evidence is particularly rare. The current debate is polarised between suggestions of a twelfth-century introduction, put forward in a seminal paper by Joan Thirsk (1966), and ninth-century origins, on the basis of field walking in Northamptonshire and Yorkshire in the 1970s and 1980s. The choice of one position rather than another has important implications for explanations of historical process between about AD 850 and 1300. The Longstanton excavations decisively show that the majority of medieval arable strips were laid out between AD 1200 and 1400, replacing late Anglo-Saxon paddocks and droves that had been used for pastoral husbandry. Documentary evidence indicates that a three-course rotation was practised in the parish during the same period, and it seems probable that both reflect a Midland open-field system. This is not far from being revolutionary research, and more work is now needed to extrapolate these results on a broader level.

Yet these are not the conclusions drawn in Chapters 8 and 12, or in the 'Conclusions', which concentrate largely on debates around the origins of medieval settlement. Claims are made that "the project demonstrated, archaeologically, the presence of late Anglo-Saxon settlement, which in most cases continued in use into the medieval period" (p. 169). It is possible that such evidence was discovered and published elsewhere, but it is not in the volume under review, where the excavations found no reliable evidence of settlement in any period except the medieval—an outlying hamlet. Although late Anglo-Saxon features were found that may *possibly* have been drip gullies or beam slots, the excavation reports do not go so far as to identify these features as structures of any kind, let alone dwellings. In other words, the concluding chapter makes broad assertions about the origins of the medieval landscape in Longstanton that are not substantiated by the preceding text. Such flaws are not helped by inconsistent referencing of earlier excavation reports, a lack of integration of the archaeological and historical evidence, and the absence of an index.

It is rare to find a volume both so interesting and, in places, so frustrating. The chronology of agricultural activity it outlines will be of lasting importance for those interested in the evolution of the productive landscape; yet the summative Chapters 8 and 12, and the 'Conclusions', concentrate almost exclusively on theoretical issues relating to the origins of medieval settlement to which the excavated evidence has remarkably little to contribute. This is an

important book whose archaeological results deserve wide recognition, albeit for reasons that the volume itself does not appear to recognise.

Reference

THIRSK, J. 1966. The origins of the common fields. *Past and Present* 33: 142–47.

SUSAN OOSTHUIZEN
Division of Archaeology
University of Cambridge, UK
(Email: smo23@cam.ac.uk)

ANDREW TESTER, SUE ANDERSON, IAN RIDDLE & ROBERT CARR. *Staunch Meadow, Brandon, Suffolk. A high-status Middle Saxon settlement on the fen edge* (East Anglian Archaeology 151). 2014. xiv+439 pages, 251 colour and b&w illustrations, and 90 tables. Bury St Edmunds: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service; 978-0-9568747-4-0 paperback £45.



This lavish volume presents the research undertaken between 1980 and 1988 on the Anglo-Saxon settlement at Staunch Meadow, Brandon, Suffolk. The settlement, dating from the mid seventh to later ninth century

AD, was situated on a raised 'island' of windblown sand, beside a 1km-wide branch of the fens that follows the valley of the Little Ouse. The excavations covered an area of 11 750m², providing one of the few large 'windows' through which to examine a complex nucleated settlement of this date in England.

Elements in the site's complex layout included 35 buildings of mostly earth-fast timber construction, a raised causeway and bridge to access the island, two cemeteries and two buildings identified as churches, and zones linked to specific manufacturing activities. Artefacts recovered included 20 Anglo-Saxon coins, copper alloy pins, personal dress items (including some of silver and gold), fragments of window glass and vessel glass, over 100 bone objects, 24 000 sherds of pottery, 157 000 fragments of animal, bird and fish bones, and 416kg of ironworking slag. There was

© Antiquity Publications Ltd, 2015