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IV. Book reviews

Christopher Evans 2009. *Fengate Revisited: Further Fen-edge Excavations, Bronze Age Fieldsystems & Settlement and the Wyman Abbot/Leeds Archives*. Cambridge Landscape Archives: Historiography and Fieldwork (No. 1). Cambridge: Cambridge Archaeological Unit. ISBN 978-0-95448-248-0.

Reviewed by **Niall Sharples**

The prehistory of Britain in the early twentieth century is sometimes thought of as documented by the archaeology of Wessex, but this is a slight exaggeration as areas such as Yorkshire and the Fens have contributed a great deal due to the activities of local antiquaries. The Fens attracted interest because they produced large quantities of metalwork, but the area around Peterborough became important as a result of the hand digging of large clay pits to supply the local brickworks. This was overseen by a competent local amateur, Wyman Abbott and his observations resulted in a string of interesting discoveries which put the region on the archaeological map. The importance of these discoveries was undermined by Wyman Abbott's failure to publish his excavations, but the quality and size of some of the pottery assemblages was recognised by scholars such as E. T. Leeds and C. F. C. Hawkes who subsequently published some of the material. The assemblages were of sufficient importance to be used as type-sites for British prehistory; the Late Neolithic is partially defined by Peterborough Wares, which include the Fengate sub-type; the Early Iron Age pottery was used to define Cunliffe's Fengate Cromer style.

The pioneering work of Wyman Abbott unfortunately did not lead to a sustained interest in the archaeology of the region and it was not until the early 1970s that Peterborough became the renewed focus for some of the most innovative archaeological excavations in Britain. This work arose because of the designation of Peterborough as a 'new town' with the resultant development of an extensive industrial estate along the fen edge. The potential of the archaeology in this area was realised by Francis Pryor, who used the evidence from the fen edge to rewrite British prehistory. His excavations resulted in the discovery of an extensive prehistoric landscape containing an early Neolithic house and mortuary structure, a Grooved Ware ring ditch and a substantial Iron Age settlement.

However, the most important element was a ditch defined field system that implied planning and organisation on a grand scale. These fields, now known as coaxial systems, were soon recognised elsewhere and they have revolutionised our understanding of the complexity of British prehistory. Pryor continued to work in the region throughout the 1980s and 1990s and he uncovered a waterlogged causewayed camp at Etton, and the artificial island with associated timber alignment and bronze deposits, at Flag Fen. This finally provided a context for the metalwork which had originally put the region on the map.

The volume reviewed here uses the continued excavation of the Peterborough industrial estates to re-examine the history and interpretation of these discoveries. It has a dual role: to place the region and the work of Wyman Abbott and Pryor into the history of British archaeology, and to present further evidence for the settlement of the region that question and expand on the original discoveries. It is clear that the importance of archaeological work in the Fens is increasing as the area is extensively excavated in advance of recent developments.

In an introductory summary of recent work an incredible amount of new and exciting discoveries are briefly outlined to tantalise the reader, including new waterlogged sites at Bradley Fen and Must Farm that will challenge the exceptional status of Flag Fen. However, this volume focuses on the early prehistoric occupation and the Middle Bronze Age field systems.

One of the principal archaeological contributions has been to reconsider the function and date of the field systems. Evans' examination of these problems clearly distinguishes this volume as a critical reappraisal of Pryor's work rather than a hagiography. He challenges Pryor's view that the field systems were created in the Late Neolithic and were in use for almost two millennia and instead argues for their creation around the end of the Early Bronze Age, contemporary either with the collared urns or early Deverel-Rimbury ceramics. The abandonment of the system was probably before the end of Deverel-Rimbury ceramics and suggests the field systems represent a very short intervention in the landscape. However, the problem of dating the ditched field systems is rightly emphasised. Pryor's excavation of the ditches at Fengate was extensive and yet he recovered very little material culture that could be said to be categorically primary material. Clearly people seldom left much in these fields.

The other major critique of Pryor's work refers to the recent re-evaluation of the system as related to the management of sheep. This has been repeatedly quoted in the literature and is one of the principal pieces of evidence that has been used to argue that these systems are associated with increasingly complicated animal management. Evans points out that this is not a feature of the original interpretation of the system, but rather reflects Pryor's recent involvement with sheep farming. However, the more important points relate to the over-whelming dominance of cattle in the animal bone assemblages and a reinterpretation of the 'sheep runs' as embanked hedges both of which are convincing arguments. At a more general level doubt is also expressed on the role of animal management in the creation of the systems. Moving animals around within these systems would require considerably more droves than are visible and the droves that do exist seem designed to enable animals to pass through the system rather than to interact with it.

This volume has a great tale to tell and does so in a fashion that is always engaging and illuminating.

Evans took part in the excavations at Fengate and appears in one of the many photographs that illuminate the volume. As befits such a complex landscape the volume contains numerous insets that cover all sorts of asides about recording practice, sampling and redundant information, Neolithic houses, etc. But perhaps the most enjoyable of these asides is the concluding section which presents interviews with Pryor, Fleming and Bradley who were all pioneers in the interpretation of early field systems. This is a delight and an important historical document that contributes a significant lesson on the serendipity of archaeological field-work.

Paul Rehak (ed. John G. Younger) 2007. *Imperium and Cosmos: Augustus and the Northern Campus Martius*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. ISBN 978-0-29922-014-3.

Reviewed by **Patrick Murray**

In a famous passage in his life of Augustus, Suetonius reflects on the extent of the transformation of Rome's cityscape under the *princeps*: in Suetonius' estimation, Augustus had 'so beautified [Rome]... that he could justly boast that he had found it built of brick and left it in marble'. Much has been written about the Augustan program of building and refurbishment in the area of the Fora, and in the Southern Campus Martius. In *Imperium and Cosmos*, Paul Rehak briefly discusses the process by which Augustus and other members of his family remodelled these public areas into Julian family monuments, excluding the great Senatorial families who had traditionally used them for competitive displays of power and wealth.

But Rehak's focus is on the Northern Campus Martius, and the complex of four monuments built by Augustus in the decades after Actium. These monuments – the Ustrinum (site of Augustus' cremation); the Mausoleum; the Horologium-Solarium (an enormous sundial); and the Ara Pacis Augustae (the Altar of Augustan Peace) – form a distinct part of Augustus' building program. Unlike the buildings of the Southern Campus Martius and the Fora, the Northern Campus Martius complex possesses none of the 'political, military, commercial or social functions' ordinarily associated with Roman public buildings. Rather, as Rehak argues, they were intended as expressions of monarchical and divine power, and stand in marked contrast to Augustus' preferred image of himself as first among senatorial equals.

Imperium and Cosmos provides a meticulous discussion of the monuments' structure and the imagery of their sculpture, contextualising Rehak's analysis of the overall ideological program behind the complex. Rehak mounts a compelling case for the complex as a 'cognitive map of cosmic imperium', intended to commemorate Augustus' life and achievements, to serve as the ground for his apotheosis and deification after his death, and as a 'declaration and definition of' the imperial role Augustus had come to play, a yardstick against which his successors would be measured. The complex resembles the monuments of Hellenistic ruler cults – and, as Rehak points out, this resemblance is no coincidence, given Augustus' veneration of Alexander the Great, and exposure to the royal sites of the East.

Far from emphasising continuity with the Republic, each of the monuments that make up the complex 'convey specific monarchical messages' to the viewer. The Ustrinum facilitated Augustus' apotheosis as his mortal body was destroyed by fire, while the Mausoleum – unmistakably a dynastic tomb – provided a resting place for the new Roman Imperial family, and was surmounted by Augustus' deified figure, looking out over Rome from what must have seemed a heavenly height. The Horologium-Solarium 'elevate[d] Augustan time and the birth of the princeps to a cosmic level', stamping Augustus' conception, birth and life as events of immense astrological significance – the beginning of a new 'Golden Age' – and placing Augustus at the centre of the cosmos. Finally, the Ara Pacis served as a memorial to the peace Augustus had won, but also as a symbol of the new 'Golden Age', and a means by which Augustus could align his achievements with those of Rome's first kings, Romulus and Numa.