

is well worth the £28 price tag, but it is too expensive to generate new interest in this class of building. Let us hope that it will be followed by a series of slimmer paperbacks, possibly using the same internal format, but selling in the £5 to £7 price range and developing some of the themes suggested in this first volume. Perhaps we might even see the abandonment of the County Inventory series and the wholehearted adoption of the thematic approach for further RCAHMS publications.

Bruce Walker

***SHETLAND ARCHAEOLOGY* Ed. B. Smith. The Shetland Times Ltd. Lerwick 1985. 220pp.**

It must have been with a great sense of relief that the papers originally delivered in May 1980, were published in 1985 as the volume *SHETLAND ARCHAEOLOGY – New Work in Shetland in the 1970s*. The archaeology of Shetland has received until now little in the way of recognition through publication, with few exceptions (the most obvious being Hamilton's volume on Jarlshof published as long ago as 1956!). However, with this volume the tide has turned: the Introduction states that '... Shetland, whose prehistory and history is visible everywhere, deserves a full time archaeologist', and here too, the advent of Ms Val Turner to fill this recently created post, will help to ensure that the contribution Shetland archaeology can make to the wider scene, can come to fruition.

Brian Smith has successfully edited in this volume, a series of papers covering most periods of archaeological activity on the islands and most of the papers provide fundamental information on specific sites or aspects. Whittle provides a useful survey of the Neolithic-Bronze Age period in Shetland, including references to more recent field surveys undertaken by Barcham and Winham. His own excavations at Scord of Brouster are outlined, expanding on the preliminary report of 1979 (in *Current Archaeology*) and considering the site in relation to wider issues. He points out that ... 'It can be argued that marginality is a relative concept..' and this holds true as the theme of the volume. He advocates extensive field survey as a cheap alternative to excavation, and in a landscape so understudied as Shetland, the results from such surveys will be crucial to the

development of excavation priorities.

Lamb takes on the theme of examining prehistoric settlement in relation to the contemporary landscape and provides a useful summary of his work at Sumburgh. The total overwhelming of landscapes by sand and their subsequent erosion is a problem common to many areas and Lamb's work at Sumburgh was just one approach to the problem. Unfortunately the photographs in this article are of rather variable quality.

Fojut presents information on the 'most studied aspect of the whole of Shetland prehistory' and attempts to consider the brochs amid the potentially contemporary structures such as Duns, promontory forts etc. This is a useful summation of the state of play (in 1980), with good photographs, and a useful appendix of Iron Age sites which will be particularly helpful when a Sites and Monuments Record is established in Shetland.

Cracknell and Smith present a clear account of the excavation at Mavis Grind, including consideration of the artefacts recovered from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age site. This work is now published more fully in *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, but this is a most useful synthesis.

The paper by Bigelow on the Late Norse settlement at Sandwick, provides a breakdown of an interesting approach to the study of a settlement unit of the period. Prior to this work, Jarlshof and Underhoull were the only sites published and to which reference could be readily made. The economic information is crucial to our understanding of the period and indicates, in conjunction with similar detailed work elsewhere in the North (eg Birsay, Orkney and particularly Freswick in Caithness) the tremendous range of material which can be considered and from which broader economic and environmental considerations can be made. A number of very important points are made in this paper, including a definition of the term Late Norse, and also the recording of a pre-Viking grave feature which brings Shetland into line with other areas in the North.

The multi-disciplinary approach to the study of Papa Stour presented by Crawford has also been long-awaited. The combination

of the literary record and archaeology provided the identification of a most unusual site, mentioned in 1299 as a ducal farmstead: a site which to a certain extent, continued to be occupied until more recent times, unlike most examples of the period in the North, and one which revealed a tremendous wealth of material, including a wooden floor. This is an important article because it provides considerable detail of the project to that stage. The work has now (1987) been recently completed.

Fenton's paper on vernacular architecture once more suggests an integrated approach using archaeology and early literature. It includes a general survey starting with Buckquoy in Orkney (!), considering buildings as part of an integrated environment. The usual wide-ranging parallels are outlined.

The final paper of the volume by Tom Henderson considers the marine archaeology of Shetland. The book is dedicated to him since he died during the preparation of the volume, and this is indeed a fitting tribute to a man for whom Shetland and its history was such an important part of life. His survey of the wrecks around the Shetland coast, serves as a reminder of mans' ineffectual battle with the sea, and the impact this must surely have had on settlement at all periods. Henderson uses the information in his own words, to reflect that the wrecks around Shetland are ... 'in fact a microcosm of the maritime history of Northern Europe from the sixteenth century onwards ...'. This is a fitting conclusion to such a volume: no longer can we see Shetland as marginal or even insular at any period – it is clearly an integral part of the whole cultural picture of the North and beyond. We await with interest the results of the ongoing work, the archaeology of Shetland in the 1980s and 1990s.

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