

REVIEWS

Barbara E. Crawford: *Scandinavian Scotland. Scotland in the Early Middle Ages, 2, Studies in The Early History of Britain.* Leicester University Press, 1987. 274pp. illus. £9.95.

In her acknowledgements, the author of this volume writes, “‘The Vikings’ are an elusive phenomenon, and although very real in the popular imagination, exceedingly difficult to pin down through historical fact and archaeological artefact in the part of Britain covered by this book”. Such a statement, coming as it does from a foremost practitioner of the art of unravelling the history of Dark Age and Early Mediaeval Scotland, well expresses the problems which are faced by any scholar trying to cope with this fascinating section of our past.

For many years now, there has been a real need for a volume which tackles Scandinavian Scotland in *all* its aspects, and through the whole geographical field. While there have been vital contributions in narrower fields, such as Fenton and Pálsson’s *The Northern and Western Isles in the Viking World* (1984), or more general studies, such as H.R. Loyn’s *The Vikings in Britain* (1977) and Forte and Wilson’s *The Viking Achievement* (1970), no single volume devoted to Scotland, embracing all current research, has been published. This volume certainly sets out to fill this long-standing requirement and, for good measure, includes Man in the Scottish scene.

The volume, after an introductory discussion on sources and evidence, divides into seven major sections. The geographical framework, covering both the maritime and the physical environments, is followed by two sections examining the chronological framework (c800-945 and c975-1065.) Chapter 4 covers the important ‘linguistic framework’ which includes a survey of the linguistic regions, relations with pre-Viking inhabitants and settlement toponymy. The archaeological framework covers two sections, the first dealing with ‘settlement and economy’, followed by ‘Conversion and the Organization of Christianity’. The final section deals with the literary framework, and Norse Society in the settlements, and looks at such topics as ‘odal’ tenure, slavery and Celtic survival, and a short discussion on ‘the status of women’.

There is an excellent bibliography, together with notes and a comprehensive index. The volume is well illustrated by eighty illustrations, including maps and diagrams.

In a short review such as this, it is impossible to describe the many threads of discussion which run through the volume. In many respects Dr. Crawford's bold treatment of the linguistic evidence (Chapter 4) is most valuable, since it sets out the various linguistic 'provinces' which have been affected by Norse speech and place-names. In her map on p. 93 she outlines these provinces in some detail, suggesting that Danish settlement in northern and eastern England were responsible for the linguistic influence ostensibly present in South-east Scotland. She rightly stresses the lack of historical documentation relating to these early Scandinavian place-names, noting that 'the linguistic material is far more significant in its distribution than the handful of settlement sites that have been excavated or the scanty written sources which throw scarcely any light upon this thorny problem.' This section, also, lays out the onomastic evidence from such place-name specialists as Nicolaisen and Fellows-Jensen, and settlement specialists like Alan Small (Figs. 26-30, pp. 95-109.) It is such organisation and presentation that makes this section such a valuable, yet compact, account of the problems and the potential of place-name evidence.

While Dr. Crawford is primarily a Mediaeval Historian, her expertise in Viking archaeology is well-known and highly regarded. This makes her survey of what is a complex and often bewildering assortment of physical evidence particularly fascinating.

In the sections dealing with graves, hoards and settlements, she selects key examples from both Scotland and the Isle of Man which have been some of most significant indicators of the Viking way of life, including such sites as Jarlshof, Brough of Birsay and Buckquoy, as well as examining Pagan and Christian sculpture which throws light on the contact between native cultures and Scandinavian tradition. This is, as she admits 'difficult to analyse' despite 'the rich corpus of source material' (p.172).

The final section devoted to the literary aspects of Viking remains is, again, selective. Here she deals with such diverse topics as 'Pagan beliefs and the cult of Odin', 'The struggle over 'odal' rights', 'Thing-

sites' and 'A colonial society'.

What emerges from the volume is a world which is constantly changing, and subject to many forces which have their origin outwith the Scotland which the Vikings inhabited. We are left with the impression that Scotland lay at the crossroads of many influences, from the Baltic, the low countries and further east, and Iceland to the west. Dr. Crawford suggests that the Norse settlers of Scandinavian Scotland 'were not only familiar with the political and cultural situation in Scotland and Ireland, but also mobile enough to be well-informed about the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish Kingdoms.' (p. 214). In a short 'Epilogue' (pp. 219-222), the author attempts to assess the contribution of the Vikings to the history of Scotland, pointing to the many influences which they had on neighbouring states, their commercial and mercantile achievements (as witnessed in such complex centres as York and Dublin) and the effect which they had on the Christian world of the period. She here strives to provide alternative suggestions to the long-held ideas that the Vikings were destructive rather than the opposite in their dealing with their neighbours.

No survey of this kind is easy to write, and still more difficult to present as a compact and readable volume. Dr. Crawford is to be congratulated in succeeding to satisfy both the academic and the general reader, who will find this book a valuable reference. It will, I think, especially appeal to undergraduate students who have to ransack reading-lists for books and articles on specialist aspects of Viking history, while wasting a great deal of time trying, often unsuccessfully, to separate the wheat from the chaff. At long last, your reviewer will be able to direct his students to a thoroughly scholarly appraisal of Scandinavian Scotland, without feeling guilty about over-burdening them with a three-page reading list.

It is perhaps significant that Dr. Crawford dedicates the volume to the members of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 'in whose stimulating and enjoyable company' she has visited many of the places mentioned in this book. At under £10, the volume is extremely good value for money, and Leicester University Press should be well satisfied that with this publication it has succeeded in its aim of crossing

and removing academic frontiers.

Ian A. Fraser

Geoffrey D. Hay and Geoffrey P. Stell: *Monuments of Industry: An Illustrated Historical Record.*

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: HMSO. Edinburgh, 1986. ISBN 0 11 492457 0. 276 x 219mm. 248 pages illustrated in b/w. Hardback. £28.00.

Monuments of Industry is a particularly significant book: it confirms a new RCAHMS thematic publication policy and marks the end of an era since it coincides with Geoffrey Hay's retirement. The book presents a beautifully illustrated account of a selection of Scottish industrial buildings and represents an important aspect of the recording work undertaken by the authors as part of the RCAHMS inventory research and threatened buildings survey programmes.

There are seven main sections to the book, each with an explanatory introduction. The sections deal with the buildings, machinery and processes associated with: farming and fishing; malt whisky distilling; textiles; metallurgy and engineering; engines and machines; extractive, chemical and related industries; and communications.

The text is authoritative, but, of necessity, limited to a summary of the background to each group of monuments. Individual entries describe the buildings, machinery and processes from a structural and technical standpoint, and the monuments range in scale from clack mills, horse engines and kippering kilns to large heavy-engineering workshops, airship sheds, harbours and quarries, and in age from medieval bridges to World War I seaplane and aircraft hangers.

The feature that makes this an outstanding book is Geoffrey Hay's line drawings. These emphasise the importance of high quality survey and analytical drawings in the preparation of a permanent record of any building or process. Hay demonstrates a wide range of visual recording techniques which helps give life and substance to