

the inhabited world.

I think that Chris Morris has succeeded in fulfilling both of these requirements admirably. It has to be said that the bulk of this volume is a scientific record of his excavations, and that the non-expert will not understand everything that is written, or indeed wish to read it all. It is an archaeological report. There is nonetheless an informed breadth of approach. The author has brought together other experts' understanding of the geology, topography, toponymy and history of the Birsay Bay area and he links his own archaeological findings into the whole cultural, social and economic picture. Eventually a complete picture will be drawn of the history of human settlement in this locality; or as complete as it will be possible to be, given the restrictions on excavation in the most important section of the Brough remains, and around the church in the village. Given those restrictions, the most pressing historical questions about where Earl Thorfinn's residence and church must have been situated will never be answered! However the next volumes of The Birsay Bay Project will certainly help to answer some questions about that high status site on the Brough as well as others near the village. We wish Chris Morris good speed in the next stage of this remarkable undertaking – as well as our congratulations on his appointment to the Chair of Archaeology in the University of Glasgow. The Society looks forward to more meetings in Glasgow in the future and to the further development of Viking studies in Scotland which his appointment is sure to foster.

Barbara Crawford

Derek Flinn: Travellers in a bygone Shetland: An anthology. Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press. pp xiv 278, figs, plates, indexes, sources.

For many in Scotland and England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Shetland seemed to be incredibly remote. Not so for many from Continental Europe, who came to fish or sailed past bound to and from the Atlantic. This book concentrates on the personal experiences of many travellers, especially from mainland Britain, and mainly between the mid-eighteenth century when the first regular packet services commenced, till the mid-nineteenth century, at the time when steamship links began to be a regular feature of communications between Shetland and mainland Britain.

The book begins with a very useful chapter dealing with the history of the packet services in this period. There follows a series of 20 chapters based on the occupations of the travellers. Half of these are in the plural, and deal especially with those who followed the sea as a means of making a living, ranging for example, from the shipwrecked seamen through fishermen and Greenland whalers to the hydrographers. The other half are individuals, including some very well known travellers such as Samuel Hibbert, the geologist; Sir Walter Scott; Biot the French physicist; and Christian Ployen, Danish Governor of Faroe in the late 1830s.

The basic approach is to include very long extracts from journals and other sources, suitably woven together by the author's text, to give a flavour of the personal experiences of the travellers concerned, rather than what they were told by the local people or learned from books. There thus emerges some graphic accounts which evoke both the atmosphere of the

place and the nature of the people.

Some interesting themes emerge. The range of occupations – and hence purposes for travel – is considerable. Apart from the seafaring occupations already mentioned, the professions are perhaps not surprisingly well represented; no doubt because such travellers tended to write down their experiences; included are surveyors, preachers, naturalists and relief inspectors. The long quoted passages graphically illustrate the atmosphere of people and place. In Shetland many visits have become part of the historical landscape, as well known as the local individuals and events which are also part of that landscape, and lend a timeless quality to the importance of people in such a close-knit community.

The usefulness of the book is enhanced by ample contemporary illustrations (with notes), and indexes of people, ships, Shetland place-names, dates and subjects. The sources are organised by chapter. It is an excellent work, and worthwhile undertaking. As the author says: "Their accounts bring the history of Shetland to life and enable the present day reader to understand better Shetland and the Shetlanders."

Hance D Smith

***Vikings in Russia. Yngvar's Saga and Eymund's Saga.* Translated and introduced by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, EUP, 1989. 102pp. £15.00**

A great event at home may leave no mark abroad: that seems to have been the fate of Yngvar the Far-Travelled and his companions who, in the first half of the 11th century, set out from the region around Mälaren and disappeared into the vastnesses of Russia without leaving any ascertainable traces of their activities there. At home, however, their failure to return is commemorated in 26 or so rune-stones whose inscriptions range from the pious ("Klint and Bleik erected this stone in memory of their father Gunnvid. He went away with Yngvar. God the Lord save the souls of all Christians. Thorir trana carved the runes.") to poetically phrased but brutally blunt statements of intention and result ("Tola had this stone erected in memory of her son Harald, Yngvar's brother. They travelled boldly away for gold, and in the east they fed the eagle. They died south in Särkland.")). Yngvar, then, at least has this much history on his side though, as Pálsson and Edwards state, were it not for such corroborative evidence "scholars and other historians would certainly have rejected the whole account as sheer invention by the saga author" (p.11). Eymund's Saga, on the other hand, cannot even make that much claim to be a historical record and the translators conclude that it "is a construct of conventional material" assembled by its author "from all the sundry materials he could lay his hands on" (p.13).

The two sagas contained in this volume, both appearing in English for the first time, are short texts of a little over 20 pages each. *Yngvar's Saga*, an augmented Icelandic translation of the monk Odd Snorrason's lost Latin *Vita Yngvari* of c1180, tells of the Swedish prince Yngvar who, unable to achieve kingship at home, sets out to find himself a kingdom in the east. The journey develops into both a romantic quest for the source of a great river and into a Christian mission. His adventures involve him with dragons, giants, sorcerers and pagan seductresses, and he dies of disease in 1041 while returning from the river source to marry Queen Silkisif who has promised him her realm when he partially converted her on his outward journey. In an