The Birth of a Borough: An Archaeological Study of Anglo-Saxon Stafford. By

This latest offering from Martin Carver, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology
at the University of York, is an archaeological monograph which synthesizes the
results of a ten-year campaign of intensive archaeological research conducted in
the midlands town of Stafford between 1975 and 1985. The book tells the story
of Stafford, which was founded as a military stronghold by King Alfred’s
daughter Æthelflæd during the tenth century and became a thriving Late Saxon
economic centre before being virtually abandoned in the aftermath of the
Norman Conquest. The town only rose to prominence again in the late twelfth
century.

The first chapter (‘Questions’) introduces the structure and ethos of the book,
and sets out the research questions to which the book attempts to provide
answers. Specifically, these concern the development of Stafford itself and its
wider context as one of the series of fortified burhs founded across lowland
England during the Late Saxon period. This is complemented by chapter 2
(‘Digging up Stafford’), which provides a history of the archaeological investiga-
tions undertaken in Stafford and discusses the rationale behind their execu-
tion. Throughout the book the author synthesizes a considerable amount of
archaeological data resulting from these investigations, the vast majority of
which has been made available online via the Archaeology Data Service, to
which the reader is often referred. Chapter 3 (‘Seven Windows on Early Strat-
ford’) provides more detailed summaries of the seven principal archaeological
excavations that were undertaken within the town during the late 1970s and
early 1980s. These summaries are extensively illustrated with original photo-
graphs and site plans. The chapter concludes with a brief synthetic chronology of
the development of Stafford derived from the results of these archaeological
excavations.

Chapter 4 (‘Æthelflæd’s Town’) synthesizes the archaeological evidence for
the Iron Age and Roman use of the site prior to the establishment of the burh in
the tenth century, and provides a detailed analysis of the character, form and
function of the burh itself, which the author argues was founded in the Roman
image and run along Roman lines. Subjects covered include the archaeological
evidence for cereal processing, the consumption of animals, the early phases of
St Bertelin’s church, the Stafford mint, and, especially, the Stafford-ware pottery
industry, the latter being extensively illustrated. The story of Stafford continues
in chapter 5 (‘Aftermath’), which discusses the effect of the Norman Conquest
on the Anglo-Saxon burh, after which a castle was founded within the town while
other parts of the town were abandoned and fell into disuse. The town appears
to have experienced an economic revival from the late twelfth to the fourteenth
century, evidenced by extensive medieval occupation evidence and a resurgence
in pottery production, among other indicators.

The final chapter (‘Anglo-Saxon Stafford in Context’) takes the evidence for
the burh presented in the previous chapters and places it at the centre of a
detailed and enlightening discussion of the wider origins and use of the fortified
burh in Anglo-Saxon Mercia and Wessex. Particular regard is paid to two
hypotheses about the founding of the burhs – that they were constructed on
existing royal foundations or that they were focused on existing ecclesiastical
foundations – but these sites, Carver concludes, were chosen for strategic
reasons and were deliberately modelled on Roman fortifications, their occupants
even going so far as to mint coins and produce Roman-style pottery.

This book is very well produced, comprising an A4 hardback lavishly illus-
trated throughout with line drawings and black-and-white photographs,
although the four colour plates that open the volume really only serve to draw
attention to the lack of colour in the rest of the book. In general, all the
illustrations are reproduced to a very high standard, although some of the
labels are difficult to read due to the scale at which they are presented. While
many of the archaeological plans and diagrams are reproduced directly from
the original site archives, some are now showing their age and the overall
presentation of the book may have benefited from their being redrawn in a
consistent house style.

This book is one of several recent volumes that have effectively and success-
fully drawn together and synthesized a number of discrete excavations and used
them to tell the story of a single town or settlement. The author is to be
commended for ensuring that these important results have been brought to
publication and for ensuring that the substantive complementary site archive has
been made freely available online. Although arguably the contents of the book
will primarily be of interest to those concerned with Stafford itself, there is a
wider relevance here for those interested in the development of English urban
centres in general and the concluding discussion of the origins and function of
the burhs makes this volume of great relevance to Anglo-Saxon scholars
everywhere.

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Sanctuary and Crime in the Middle Ages, 400–1500. By Karl Shoemaker.
Fordham University Press. 2011. xiv + 269pp. £56.50/$65.00.

A right of sanctuary attached to Christian churches, which protected any
wrongdoer or suspected wrongdoer who had managed to enter a church or the
consecrated land surrounding it from being forcibly removed and provided him
or her with effective immunity from capital or corporal punishment, is first
clearly visible in the late fourth century in Roman imperial edicts which
restricted some claims to sanctuary but implicitly recognized others. Thereafter,
the right seems to have been generally accepted in both secular and ecclesiastical
law throughout western Europe for over a millennium. Its end came relatively
quickly during the century after 1500, with the effective withdrawal of its legal
recognition in both Protestant England and Catholic France during the first half
of the century, and what amounted in practice to a papal abolition of the
entitlement under canon law in 1597.

Although there have been a number of recent and not so recent papers and a
number of unpublished doctoral theses on aspects of sanctuary law, it has been
over a century since the last general monograph on the subject appeared in
English. This was Norman Trenholme’s The Right of Sanctuary in England: A
Study in Institutional History, which appeared in 1903 and whose main focus was
on the history of sanctuary in England. So Karl Shoemaker’s monograph
deserves a welcome from historians as a brave attempt at providing a modern
account of this phenomenon and all within the relatively brief space of under 200
pages, plus just over fifty pages of endnotes.
The English are 'one third' Anglo-Saxon: Study reveals for the first time how immigrants mixed with British population. Anglo-Saxon immigrants genetically similar to modern Dutch and Danish. Contributed 38% of the DNA of modern people from East England. The great work is not only the first known book to treat the English as a single unified group, but it also pioneered the practice of counting dates from the birth of Christ, as we still do today. Bede later known as 'the Venerable' died shortly after reciting an Old English poem, and his grave is now in Durham Cathedral. Papers placing Anglo-Saxon England in its international context, including contemporary themes from neighbouring countries, will receive as warm a welcome as papers on England itself. Papers submitted to ASSAH must be accurate and readable without detailed specialist knowledge. They must now also conform to the new house style which has been... The excavation of a Saxon farmstead and cemetery was undertaken by Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust in 1997. The site comprised c. 3.92 hectares of arable land immediately south of Station Road, Gamlingay, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 2430 5190), (Fig.
The Anglo-Saxons were the dominant people living in England from the mid-5th century AD until the Norman conquest in 1066. They spoke Germanic languages and are identified by Bede as the descendants of three powerful tribes. These were the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Their language, Anglo-Saxon or Old English, came from West Germanic dialects. It changed into Middle English from about the 11th century. Old English was divided into four main dialects: West Saxon, Mercian, Northumbrian and Kentish. Traces of the Anglo-Saxon abbey were found during renovation work at Bath Abbey. (Wessex Archaeology) 966 AD depiction of King Edgar I. (Public Domain). The Nasrid Dynasty and the Birth of the Alhambra Palace. Ancient Origins has been quoted by: Top New Stories. The goal of Ancient Origins is to highlight recent archaeological discoveries, peer-reviewed academic research and evidence, as well as offering alternative viewpoints and explanations of science, archaeology, mythology, religion and history around the globe. We're the only Pop Archaeology site combining scientific research with out-of-the-box perspectives.