Editorial

With the appearance of this issue, we complete volume **7**, nominally for 1989, and will thus have reduced to some extent the unfortunate backlog of issues. Providing we can maintain the momentum, we may be able to catch up completely by the end of next year!

Inevitably we must apologise to some of our authors for long delays in dealing with typescripts; we hope this won't discourage intending authors from submitting papers or other material for publication. Since we currently have rather little copy 'in hand', we should be able to achieve a much quicker turn-round for new material. (At the risk of repetitive whinging, we must remind our readership that *Circaea* is, prepared in the Editors' vanishingly little 'spare' time!)

We have been gratified by the response to the new format for *Circaea;* it is certainly much easier to prepare copy by the present means. Once again, we are indebted to John Carrott for patiently typing in copy received as typescripts and to authors who sent copy on PC disks. We should shortly be able to handle 3½" disks as well as 5¼" floppies and Amstrad PCW disks.

Many of you will know that the triumvirate of *Circaea* editors is now one-third depleted: Terry O'Connor has left the EAU to teach archaeological science at the University of Bradford. His contribution to *Circaea* since its inception in 1983 has, of course, been invaluable, and the 'surviving' editors will miss his input sorely. However, Terry has agreed to remain as an editorial consultant.

Professor F. W. Shotton MBE, FRS 1906–90: a personal reminiscence

My first encounter with 'Fred' Shotton was on the fateful day in 1969 when I visited the Department of Geology at Birmingham University to decide whether I wanted to become a Quaternary entomologist. Fred was a somewhat shadowy figure to me, as a rather muddled graduate, but my abiding memory is of a huge, gentle man, standing at a distance, with a delightfully mischievous glint in his eye.

Three years at Birmingham served to convince me that Fred was, indeed, a kindly giant, a straightforward man who regarded members of his department almost as family, treating them with a mixture of sternness and parental indulgence. He could certainly be downright fierce, as illustrated by the possibly apocryphal incident in which he led a group of senior academic staff through a demonstration by students who, until faced with Fred's bulk had a mind to barricade the Senate in its meeting room. Certainly not apocryphal are the stories in which Fred appears in the radiocarbon laboratory, giving forth on the importance of sample purity while the cigarette hanging from his lip liberally sheds ash everywhere!

I knew little of Fred as a geologist when I worked in his department, but I was deeply impressed by his broad and often detailed knowledge of natural history, and of course especially pleased by his interest in insects. Going into the field with him was hard work—even immediately before retiring, he could put us youngsters to shame, whether augering or just striding across the treacherous terrain of a gravel pit. However, the hard work was accompanied by a stream of amusing anecdotes and enlightening information about geology, biology and life in general, which made the physical suffering worthwhile.

My time at Birmingham was marked by upheavals in my personal life, and eventually I left to take up a post at the Natural History Museum, never getting round to writing up. An intermittent correspondence records my communications with Fred on the subject of thesis writing—he managed to convey displeasure, understanding and encouragement in about equal measure. His concern for ex-students was evident in the support he gave while 'that rascal Kenward' was trying to decide what to do with his life, and his behind-the-scenes support for environmental archaeology in general and the York Unit in particular leaves us all in his debt.

If only there could be more like him!

Harry Kenward

Book reviews

A. T. Lucas (1989). *Cattle in ancient Ireland. Studies in Irish archaeology and history.* Kilkenny: Boethius Press. ISBN 0 86314 145 5. Soft cover, 315pp., about 15 punt (approx. £14).

This volume originates from the Rhind lectures given to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland at Edinburgh University in 1971. Dr Lucas, a former head of the National Museum of Ireland, was still preparing them for publication two days before his death in 1986, and the task was finally completed by Professors E. Rynne and G. MacEoin last year.

The book is based entirely on literary sources, mainly Irish records (the Annals of the Four Masters, for example), some of which date from the 7th century AD and are written in obscure old Irish. However, mainly after his lectures were delivered, Dr Lucas discovered numerous non-Irish accounts, mainly military, dating from Norman times onwards, and a few 19th and even 20th century writings by government officials and amateur historians in the field. These, and the ambiguity of Early Irish, caused Dr Lucas to remark that he was cursed above all cattle.

The Irish Annals only record abnormal events. The military accounts are filled with astonishment at what the Irish apparently thought normal, though that normality must have been considerably disrupted by the presence of an occupying power. Later oral evidence from 'the peasantry' was influenced by the attitude of the recorder to his informer: if he thought the latter was ignorant or slow-witted, he was liable to edit and embellish. Moreover, the recorded was probably told what he wanted to hear, in the hope that 'his honour' would dig deeper into his pocket for a tip. Dr Lucas does not appear to have consulted any agricultural experts, who might have been able to clear up some of his problems.

The history of Irish cattle husbandry is important, since it dominated Irish agriculture and is probably relevant to a considerably earlier period than when it was written down. The Irish had no Roman occupation to make them change their Iron Age ways, though they had, of course, received Celtic Christianity. The Irish climate also means that this history may not be fully relevant to the rest of northern Europe. In addition, the cattle were almost exclusively used for milk production, and horses were used for traction. Hence most of this work refers specifically to cows, and only occasionally to calves and bulls, 'beeves' having had little importance before the military occupations. Population density in Ireland was probably much lower than in at least the English part of the British Isles and much of Continental Europe.

The cattle seem to have been kept in self-contained herds, probably numbering less than 60 cows, called *creaghta*. (The term also came to be applied to individual animals or their herders and its spelling was very variable). The group may also have included sheep and goats, particularly during the later Middle Ages. Their care was the exclusive task of families of servile herders, the women doing the milking. The vast areas of summer pasture in Ireland, both bog and mountain, meant that transhumance (*booleying*) was widely practised. Winter forage was scarce and consisted largely of uncut meadowland. Such hay as was made was reserved for horses.

Sometimes the *creaghta* were continually on the move, in which case they might have been owned by their herders. Grazing was sometimes rented, sometimes they trespassed, and sometimes they were welcome, no doubt as providers of manure. There seem to have been considerable areas of unoccupied land. A *creaght* might be attached to an army on the move; overlords sometimes 'borrowed' their tenants' cows for this purpose.

The word *creaght* is suspiciously like *creach*, which means cattle raid. Raiding was an institutionalised affair which regularly took place between established enemies. It was, however, considered unsporting to carry out a raid shortly after promising not to do so before a senior clergyman. The herds of the monasteries were usually safe from raiders, as it was believed that the clergy could deliver effective curses. Sometimes clerics were invited to bless a projected raid, and received some of the spoils if successful.

The animals were driven off on foot by herders, whilst the mounted aristocracy held off pursuers. This was considered to be good military training. The cows were rarely harmed; there was a law against killing them unless really old and barren, of equal importance to the law against killing women. Slaughter only seem to have taken place out of spite, when animals had been secreted in a place from which it was impossible to drive them. Many remote valleys were closed off by stockades. On occasion, the raid was a method of collecting taxes. Though some spectacular raids took place over hundreds of miles, notably in and out of Ulster, most animals were only moved about one day's journey, and on occasion cows returned home of their own accord.

Though there is little direct information about the husbandry of the individual cow, many inferences can be made. Shortage of winter fodder would have resulted in a small, slow-growing animal, and cows were not expected to calve before they were four years old. The proportion of bulls to cows was high - one bull to ten cows being mentioned on two occasions - suggesting that fertility was poor. Calving did not take place until June, by which time the cows would have recovered sufficiently from winter deprivation to give a satisfactory lactation. This was probably infinitesimal by present day standards, or even those of 50 years ago, when 600 gallons (2700 litres) was considered an adequate commercial average. The lactation period was probably also short, lasting five to six months, since Christmas was considered to be a good time for raiding.

Because of the raiders and the presence of wolves, cows were returned to the homestead at night. Milking then took place, for which the presence of the calf was usually necessary. The development of the free let-down process, whereby the presence of the milker in familiar surroundings is sufficient, seems to have been slow to develop in Irish cattle. The standard techniques of vaginal stimulation and the disguise of a strange calf by covering it with the skin of the cow's own calf were practised, so that on occasion one fortunate live calf substituted for up to ten dead ones. The supernatural was invoked, and there were stories of wolves which had consumed calves presenting themselves for the cow's maternal attentions when persuaded by various saints to do so. On occasion, the cow might accept the herdsman's dog. These were large guard dogs, and in general each was considered to be worth six cows. Free milking was first achieved in the monastic herds, in which it was recorded that the cow licked the tonsured head of the milker as a substitute for her calf. Significantly, these herds were disturbed less than the regularly raided ones. With the exception of the divinely motivated wolves, much of what is described above is common to pastoralists the world over, from Mongolia to the ancient Near East and Africa.

Another practice which is carried out in many parts of the pastoral world is the withdrawal of blood from the living animal. This process was described as pagan, disgusting and barbarous, or as a regrettable necessity which reduced the fertility of the cow, according to the degree of understanding of the reporter. The resulting blood was coagulated and preserved with butter for winter consumption, or regularly withdrawn on a Sunday at a particular spot hallowed by ritual for immediate consumption, or was withdrawn for therapeutic reasons (such as the treatment of the parasite-induced haemolytic anaemia known as red water!), again according to the enlightenment of the informant.

By his devoted labours, Dr Lucas has performed a considerable service to archaeozoology. It would be difficult to detect most of the above events by archaeological means, and besides this, Dr Lucas describes the attitude of the early Irish towards their stock. Besides being walking currency and providing food, they were a definite part of the community. On occasion, when an important person died, the cows compulsorily became mourners. They were kept from their calves for up to three days, and the bellows of complaint from both parties were considered a desirable accompaniment to the wake. This is another world entirely from the economic strategies so beloved of present-day scholars.

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V. Pfleger and J. Chatfield (1988). A guide to snails of Britain and Europe. London: Hamlyn. ISBN 0 600 55127 X. 216pp., many figures and plates. Hardback £8.95.

T. Warmoes and R. Devriese (1987). Land- en zoetwater mollusken van de Benelux. Gent: Jeugdbond voor Natuurstudie en Milieubescherming. No ISBN. 145pp., numerous figures. Soft cover Hfl15 (about £5).

Snails have their place in environmental archaeology and, like most invertebrates, are an important indicator of the 'health' of existing habitats. The two books reviewed here are very different attempts to make this group more accessible to the amateur naturalist, and may be useful to those who work on ancient mollusc remains.

Pfleger and Chatfield's *Guide* is the English edition of a Czechoslovakian publication, and is basically a photographic guide. Over 150 species of slugs and snails, and a few freshwater bivalves, are illustrated in colour photographs which range in quality from acceptable to quite magnificent. The accompanying text is usefully detailed, and consistent in the information which it provides for each species. To the photographic section, June Chatfield has added text and line drawings to describe British taxa not otherwise mentioned, and a key to British species which is as useful as any such key could reasonably be expected to be. There is also a key to European families, and a substantial introductory text which deals with the morphology, biology and ecology of land gastropods and freshwater bivalves, and with their systematics, zoogeography, and conservation. The parochial Briton, faced with this attractive little book, will complain that many of the species depicted are not found in Britain. This is true, but it does no harm to be reminded of the range of variation in families of which we otherwise see only one or two species, and real conchophiles will enjoy a remarkable number of photographs for under £10.

Warmoes and Devriese's *Land- en zoetwater mollusken* is completely different in appearance. The book is obviously intended for use in the field, and gives an ingenious pictorial and textual key to a range of species which includes most British natives and a few more besides. The pictures are all line drawings, not always sharply reproduced on the brazenly recycled paper, and the text is in Dutch. The language barrier is not a serious problem, however, as there is a pictorial glossary of technical terms (*lip, sutuur, navel, tuberkel* ...), and the key, like most of its kind, uses a very limited vocabulary. Given a nodding acquaintance with molluscs, and the occasional dip into a Dutch dictionary, most people should find this book quite useful.

These two books deserve attention because they offer a cheap supplement to the standard literature on the identification of non-marine molluscs, and because they demonstrate, in very different ways, that a useful field guide does not need to be expensive or dull.

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Heinz Ellenberg (1988). *Vegetational ecology of central Europe*. (4th edn) [translated by G. K. Strutt]. Cambridge: University Press. 731pp. price £75.

This is a book about ecology and plant communities, an English edition of what has become the standard work on the subject for the German-speaking world. But is it relevant to the British Isles?

Indeed, is ecology relevant? It was a student story that when Professor Darlington was at the Botany School (as it then was) at Oxford he described the resident ecologist as "the incompetent in pursuit of the incomprehensible". Putting the lapse in manners aside, there is, however, a grain of truth insofar as ecological studies can be hard to understand (so also can the late professor's pet subject, genetics). Academic subjects which are generally poorly explained and bound in jargon deserve to fail to reach wide acceptance (but how to explain the rise of personal computing and all *its* jargon?).

My own contacts with ecology in the form of vegetation science made me beat an

early retreat from David Shimwell's book (*The Description and Classification of Vegetation* 1971), for example. This is surprising since his supervisor, David Bellamy, has done more than anyone to make ecology available to, and above all understood by, one and all. So, for me, ecology and especially vegetation science lay fallow for many years until, following a favourable review in *New Phytologist*, I ordered an earlier edition of Ellenberg's book for the library. When it came it was a revelation, for there was the vegetation of Central Europe beautifully laid out and clearly explained (in German). I have been an enthusiast ever since.

Now, several editions later, there is a translation offered by Cambridge University Press. It is an amazing book. One can look up any plant community in Central Europe or neighbouring regions such as the British Isles, and there is a tidy summary of the ecology and often its history too. One can either read it through, or dip into sections of interest. Heinz Ellenberg must be an amazing person with an insatiable appetite for ecology to be able to gather all this knowledge and sort it out in this way; there cannot be many people who could do this and get it all summarised and written down. In doing so, he has kept a good style that does not deal with community after community in a repetitive manner, and the level of illustrations is good.

Now for the tricky bit: translation from German is not entirely straightforward. For one thing, German is sometimes written with a particular syntax that is quite different from English and leads to a dilemma: whether to translate too literally or too interpretatively. Too-literal translation makes the result seem rather Teutonic after the style of "I have been here since half an hour, when do I become a sausage?", and interpretative translation departs from the style of the original. Another problem area is that of botanical and other rather specific terms which can be very hard to translate well, especially when there is no real equivalent in English. Here it is a matter of fine judgement whether to use the German word (maybe in quotations) or to coin a new term as appropriately as possible. The third matter is more a technical one involving the sheer size and complexity of a task with more than 700 pages and captions and text to 500 figures and the overall editing. The reviewer confesses to not having read quite every page thoroughly.

The translation mostly flows well, but sometimes there are lapses into Teutonic where the translator "becomes a sausage", for example: '...before ever man came on the scene burrows of wild animals or Deer tracks could have enabled those plants which would have found it impossible to grow in woods or swampy meadows and other perennial dense formations, to survive and spread' (p. 622). It is not strictly wrong, but sticks to the German original too closely to be good plain English.

As for botanical terms, some ecological terms such as 'therophyte' are not used here, although they are explained early on. Too-literal translations of botanical and other terms are scattered throughout, such as 'needleleaved' and elsewhere 'needle trees', (conifers); 'reaction value' (pH); 'social fallow' (sounds fun?); 'nival belt' and 'hook plough'. Some of the plant names are also translated too literally, such as Blue Cornflower and Sycamore Maple and Black Alder, these being the German common names translated rather than English ones. These are just a representative sample of botanical points, which show it is unlikely that the translator is a European botanist.

I am afraid that I am even less satisfied with overall editing and production. The book is peppered with small faults at a rate of about one per page on casual reading, which become irritating. I am not going to be boring and list them all (I can be just as tedious without), but to justify the comment, I provide these examples: I find the practice of capitalising vernacular plant names annoying if not downright wrong and, combined with literal translation of plant communities, the results are sometimes comical—I very much hope that 'the ruderal community of Good King Henry' (p. 621) will not become regarded as a proper term here, except in jest. There is editorial inconsistency, too, so that most of the geographical names are translated where there are English equivalents, but strangely not Kärnten (Carinthia), and there are a number of other things that have escaped translation. The inverted commas are back-to-front, unless this is the latest

fashion in Cambridge. The photographs are muddy compared with the originals, the re-lettering of the diagrams is often smudged (as on p. 60; it looks like the sort of thing I do myself!). The book is glued rather than sewn together, and the binding does not look as if it will survive library life for long.

The overall impression is one of carelessness. I know all too well how hard it is to rid my own work of silly little faults (let alone the big ones), but one should expect better from a company which is not exactly a back-street publisher, and for £75 (twice the cost of the German edition). When CUP produced Godwin's *History of the British Flora* one didn't look for mistakes because there weren't enough to make the search worthwhile. When the third edition of the *Flora of the British Isles* appeared, one really started to notice mistakes (well I did anyway), particularly obvious ones such as missing plant families. Unfortunately this tradition continues here.

This is basically a good book or I wouldn't bring it to the attention of *Circaea* readers. It is a very important one because it offers such a good grounding in ecology and vegetation classification (phytosociology). Polunin and Walters' *Guide to the Vegetation of Britain and Europe* of 1985 covers a larger region including the Mediterranean, in less detail, but consciously excludes phyto-sociology because it was written for the layman. Myself, I find Ellenberg's classification very convenient in helping me to understand vegetation. Although Ellenberg wrote about Central Europe he does add the surrounding regions and I believe the content mostly applies to British vegetation, although the more warmth-demanding, continental or montane vegetation is naturally less well represented here. The purely British viewpoint is an excessively narrow perspective in many matters. To view vegetation on a European scale seems to me to be worthwhile because many plant communities are far better developed in other areas—our alpine vegetation is a relict curiosity; on the Continent it is a subject in itself. As far as vegetational classification goes, I believe it is far better for botany and archaeobotany to consider the plant communities of northern and Central Europe according to the same general classification, and then compare the detailed local differences, rather than to go for a confusing plethora of regional classifications—the latter seem to me to be about as pointless in vegetation science as is the endless splitting of taxa that don't separate into true species, in systematic taxonomy—a positive hindrance to those who want to *use* the results. Ellenberg's book is here now, and the system is widely used and understood. A word of warning, however: these are modern plant communities, and great caution is needed when comparing them with archaeobotanical results.

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T. Amorosi (1989). A postcranial guide to domestic neo-natal and juvenile mammals. The identification and ageing of Old World species. *British Archaeological Reports, International Series* **533**. Oxford. 380 pp; numerous figs; ISBN 0 86054 678 0. £23-00.

This book is an attempt to collate and synthesize data pertaining to a complex subject. As is often the case with such syntheses, one's joy that the task has been undertaken must be tinged with regret that it has not been done well. The intention has been to summarise the published data concerning dental and skeletal maturation in horse, cattle, sheep, pig, dog, cat and rat, with tables of dental eruption and epiphysial fusion data, and illustrations of immature post-cranial elements for these taxa. As such, this is a useful volume which brings together diverse and disparate sources of information. That alone should assure regular sales.

Unfortunately, whilst Amorosi's book succeeds in terms of quantity of data, it falls down badly on quality of presentation. The grisly printing quality which seems to have become *BAR*'s stock-in-trade has rendered all but illegible many of the tables which Amorosi, perhaps unwisely, has presented as lineprinter output. The line illustrations vary in density, and fine lines have certainly been lost on some figures. That much, and the repetition in

the review copy of pages 159/60, can be blamed on production. The other shortcomings are attributable to the author. The text cannot have been copy-edited, unless in the pitchy dark, and typographical errors abound, as do those interesting changes of syntax which occur when words are electronically processed hither and yon around a text, ending up in the wrong place. More disturbing are the numerous academic and technical errors. To mention all of them would require too many pages, and would enter the realm of salt-rubbing. Briefly, chordate taxonomy is treated with scant regard. Ruminants and lagomorphs are described as classes of mammals, which presumably makes Mammalia a sub-phylum or something (p. 195). In discussing the distal attenuation of the ulna in equines, Amorosi equates the term "*Equus*" with species, not genus, when he possibly means to refer to the whole genus, not merely to one species (p. 226). Pigs are credited with a "complete set" of metacarpals (p. 235), when they have only four. The terminology is sometimes bewildering, as when bones are described as "cylindrical in cross-section" (p. 205 and elsewhere), or when we are told that on some femora "the greater trochanter can extend over the femoral head ..." (p. 257), which must inhibit joint articulation more than somewhat.

On the credit side, there are droves of references, many of them to works unfamiliar on this side of the Atlantic, and a bibliography of keyworks to the identification of major taxonomic groups. The bibliography mentions none of the "Munich bird bone theses", perhaps because they are unpublished, though there are some references to other unpublished material.

Can the volume be recommended? Up to a point, if only for the convenience of having so many sources summarised in one volume. It is a great pity, though, that laudable intent was not met with greater care and competence, and it would be disastrous if the existence of Amorosi's book inhibited the production of something similar but better.

Reviewer: **Terry O'Connor**
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K. Griffin, R. H. Økland, A. K. G. Jones, H. Kenward, R. W. Lie and E. Schia (1988). *De Arkeologiske Utgravninger i Gamlebyen, Oslo. Bind 5: "Mindets Tomt"- "Søndre Felt". Animal bones, moss-, plant-, insect- and parasite remains.* (E. Schia, ed.) Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide. ISBN 82-90359-37-3. 200 pages. 120 N.Kr. (about £11).

This is the 'environmental' volume on the medieval excavations at two sites in Oslo, Norway, presented in English. 'Gamlebyen' is the old town, and frequent fires created destruction layers that could be dated, thus simplifying the phasing of the archaeology.

Erik Schia (the archaeologist) wrote the chapter on the archaeological background which provides just that. Some of the main reports on the building remains and find groups have been published in volumes 1-3 of this series, and volume 4 is expected and may even have appeared.

Kerstin Griffin's botanical report is quite long and very satisfying. All the data are listed and there are eight pages of plates with good photos of the seeds so we can all see what they looked like. I find this most valuable since the subfossil appearance of many seeds is somewhat unlike the modern material, *Rhinanthus* losing its wing and Umbelliferae shedding layers, to give just two examples. It is also good to become visually familiar with the material from another site. Illustrations also improve the appearance of the whole book. The description takes one through all aspects of the interpretation very clearly. The discussion in connection with other Scandinavian finds is also very useful and readable. The complexities of understanding the various mixtures of rubbish found in medieval towns are well dealt with. The only things that Kerstin does not give are identification notes on critical taxa, as in the German style of doing things, which is very useful but also time-consuming.

Rune Økland writes about the mosses in a shorter report dealing with the remains from six moss-rich finds. It is interesting that all the mosses are still to be found in the Oslo area, while in polluted Britain taxa such as *Neckera complanata* seem to have retreated considerably towards the damp, clean West. Helge Høeg's pollen analysis results were not included in this

report, which is a pity, although they are quoted from publications. Some of the texts have been translated from Scandinavian, though to read them through one would never guess.

Harry Kenward's beetles bring a few more technical terms which non-English speakers would probably have difficulty in locating in their dictionaries, although indeed most of them are explained (such as 'obligate synanthropes') and the report passed the test of being intelligible to a non-beetle specialist (myself). He has a difficult job of presentation, since statistical analyses and terminology are by their very nature hard to express simply and clearly. The results are valuable, for it is important to have comparative beetle results from different places, and in the early medieval period particularly for comparing different parts of the former Viking empire, with Harry Kenward's own results from York and elsewhere, and now these results from Norway. He leans heavily on the evidence he has obtained from Britain, although when he wrote the report that was all that was available; other Scandinavian beetle results from Gothenburg in Sweden and Paul Buckland's results from Iceland and Greenland have since appeared. Fly puparia were just noted, not identified or discussed, but then their study is a specialism in its own right.

Andrew Jones' parasite report is particularly useful for the identification criteria that he gives to establish as far as possible the likely species of *Trichuris* present. He also provides evidence of the faecal content of the samples.

Rolf Lie's animal bone report makes sense to me and reads well, although of course I am not an expert in this field, so I cannot judge the state of the analyses. I think the 'Norwegian Pony' discussed is the Fjordhest, a very distinctive breed with upright mane, of which some examples were seen on the AEA Denmark Conference excursion, usually flashing by too quickly for Sue Stallibrass to photograph. 'Mons' (as a cat may be called in Norway in the way we use 'puss') was used for fur (according to the evidence for skinning), along with a range of other animals, but of rats and mice for his dinner there was no trace, only the vole *Arvicola terrestris* and some unspecified rodent remains. There was quite a lot of seal, probably caught locally, and walrus from further afield. Rolf Lie also identified a good bird fauna, including a peacock, and eleven fish taxa. All these are discussed with the English vernacular names, even of breeds of dog, a feat of linguistics that puts us to shame. There is not very much comparison with other sites but, judging by the bibliography, not much was published in this field when the report was written.

A volume such as this inevitably invites comparison with the 'environmental' fascicules from York. The Norwegians in some ways had a much harder job putting all this work together, with half the contributors in York and half in Oslo, and changing publication plans. The reader never sees half the difficulties that must be overcome before a publication appears, but even without them this book represents a lot of work. In other ways, the compilers may have had a freer hand in what and how to publish than is the case with the York series. The CBA which publishes the latter seems to me to add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and delay to the whole difficult business of publication. The Norwegian book's A4 format may also be better for species lists and illustrations than the York fascicules' non-standard size, and it is especially useful to see so many of the data presented in the Oslo text where they should be. A further advantage Scandinavians have over us, I think, is that they have to think more carefully about English grammar and wording than we do, and therefore tend to write clearly. The book costs the same as a couple of beers in Norway, and is of noticeably better quality than the (always improving) *BAR* series, which makes it a good book indeed. It is curious that, when I offered copies of the book for sale at an archaeobotanical workgroup where people could look at the book (and make sure it really was all in English), it sold quickly but when I offered the book for sale unseen through the AEA Newsletter I had only a single reply. This book deserves to be better known.

To summarise: I think the good presentation of these results provides many useful lessons over and above the interest of the data. Wouldn't it be wonderful if this example encouraged the production of further such combined environmental

reports from other sites?

I would like to thank Kerstin Griffin for providing me with a copy of this book.

Reviewer: **James Greig**
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D. A. Hinton (1990). *Archaeology, economy and society. England from the fifth to the fifteenth century.* London: Seaby. 245pp; about 50 figs. and plates. ISBN 1 85264 049 9. £14-95.

The realisation over the last few years that medieval England was really quite interesting has prompted a flurry of textbooks, of which David Hinton's study is one of the more synthetic. The author takes a resoundingly culture-historical approach, and moves through chronologically ordered chapters from the fall of Rome to the Renaissance. So why review the book for *Circaea*? Because Hinton draws on many lines of evidence, including studies of sediments, biota, and human remains, and thus provides an example of how bioarchaeological data can be used by 'cultural' archaeologists. Interpretations of bone and botanical data are used somewhat uncritically in assessing diet, trade and husbandry, and the sensitive reader might at times become alarmed by Hinton's cavalier abandonment of the caution with which we are accustomed to hedge-about our scientific prose. However, it is good to see the bioarchaeological evidence being used, not merely published, and being set in a wider context. For the non-specialist, discussions of the archaeological recognition of historical events and of the strengths and weaknesses of decorative metalwork typologies are useful, and the summarising of Metcalfe's work on sceattas almost makes numismatics interesting. There are the old flaws, not least the infuriating use of numbered notes for references, and Hinton has trouble with topography in remote northern areas, shifting Gauber High Pasture southwards into West Yorkshire (p. 68) and ceding Whitby to Northumberland (p. 57). Neither of these important sites, incidentally, merits an entry in the index. Gripes aside, this is a timely and readable book, which ought to provide a useful background text for anyone working on sediments or biota from medieval England.

Reviewer: **Terry O'Connor**
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Report on the International Workgroup for Palaeoethnobotany, 1989

Every three years there is a meeting of (mainly European) archaeobotanists. Looking back on the sweeping changes that are still taking place across Eastern Europe, last summer's conference in Czechoslovakia seems a long time ago.

But back to the conference. The *International Workgroup for Palaeoethnobotany* was invited by the Slovak Academy of Sciences (headed by Academician Chropovský), to hold the conference at their establishment at Nove Vozokany, in southern Czechoslovakia, in June 1989. Just sorting out visas, money, etc. proved a major research project, let alone doing anything at the conference itself. The venue was a country house, set in beautiful grounds (none of your 1960s decaying concrete British universities!), which was the right size for a meeting of this size and made it easy to wander round and talk to people. This was a very well-organised and successful meeting, at which the organisers from the Slovak Academy of Science led by Dr Hajnalová and Dr Ambros did everything possible to ensure a good conference. There were probably many difficulties in getting things done that us westerners would simply fail to comprehend (like getting photocopies made), yet the whole thing went like

clockwork: lectures were on time, projectors worked, the organisers sorted things out in many languages, the food was good and above all the conference was inexpensive (I don't think any of the British participants got a conference grant).

The programme was quite a full one with about 40 papers delivered, and there were also poster sessions. The session headings were: general views, interpretation, bibliography, data on geographical regions or single taxa, Asia, Africa, methods, etc. I shall not attempt to summarise the wide range of work presented—however the papers and posters will be published in *Monumentae Archaeologicae* and I shall doubtless give details of the appearance of the publication, when available, through the AEA newsletter. Judging by the way they do things in Czechoslovakia, we should not have to wait too long. Some papers, Professor Behre's in particular, were masterpieces in the art of presenting a piece of research.

It was particularly good to meet a large contingent from Eastern Europe, of whom very few had been able to attend either of the last two Workgroup meetings, which were held in the Netherlands and Britain (or, indeed, Professor Körber-Grohne's meeting in Stuttgart) because of difficulties of getting passports and western money. Often it was a matter of putting a face to a well-known name. Most of the time was spent talking to people, which was very interesting, but occasionally acutely frustrating—when one could not communicate with an obviously interesting Russian colleague beyond her few words of English.

On a lighter note, a choir came and sang us songs, and there was a barbecue evening. Some of the Dutch contingent are keen on birds, and they spread word around that there were storks nesting nearby, so some of us walked into the village—past the rusting steel red star (probably on some scrap heap now) set in the verge to encourage travellers towards the glories of socialism— to the churchyard, from where we could see the birds on special nest sites set up in the state farm, while local people collected the lime blossom in the churchyard. The conference excursion took us to various sites of archaeological and botanical interest, the latter including woodland with wild grape vines and forest steppe. Some people may have been surprised that I was enthusiastically photographing plants such as the thistle *Onopordon acanthium* that were common (to them) but scarcely seen in Britain. Prof. Willem van Zeist summed up the conference.

These international conferences provide a very important opportunity to find out there about the research going on around Europe, the ways of doing it, both from papers and posters given and from conversation, without the inevitable delays of publication. A great many research angles are being investigated by various people in different places, and without such communication, it is all to easy to fail to take in important results from elsewhere, especially when they are published abroad. Meeting people goes with exchanging offprints, which is very important when so much is published in relatively obscure local journals that are hard enough to trace in their country of origin, let alone from abroad. Still on this topic I would like to mention Jurgen Schultze-Motel's bibliography which covers the whole subject of archaeobotany and which is published in *Die Kulturpflanze* annually and sent out to those who send him publications. He very much depends upon people to send him offprints or photocopies of their work so that he can include it in the current year's crop, so as to speak. Archaeobotanical publications are hard to trace and obtain, over and above the difficulties of obtaining western literature in East Germany (for the time being). His address is: Dr J. Schultze-Motel, Zentralinstitut für Kulturpflanzenforschung, Correnstrasse 3, DDR 4325 Gatersleben, East Germany.

The next IWGP meeting will be organised by Helmut Kroll at Kiel, north-west Germany, in 1992. By then, it is to be hoped, almost all the archaeobotanists attending will be able to travel there freely on Common Market passports and the old alternation of meetings between East and West Europe will be an anachronism.

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