



# The Archaeological Journal

## Book Reviews



**BRITONS AND ANGLO-SAXONS: LINCOLNSHIRE AD 400-650.** By Thomas Green. Pp. xvi and 320, Illus 48. The History of Lincolnshire Committee (Studies in the History of Lincolnshire, 3), 2012. Price: £17.95. ISBN 978 090266 825 6.

Following the completion of the History of Lincolnshire Committee's admirable twelve-volume history of the county, this book represents the third of a new series of more detailed studies of the region. Based upon his Ph D thesis, Thomas Green addresses the extent of Anglo-Saxon acculturation of Lincolnshire in the centuries following the withdrawal of the Roman legions, and the late survival of the British kingdom of Lindsey, centred on Lincoln. Despite Lincolnshire's vulnerability to mass Germanic migration — according to traditional models — the substantial mid-fifth-century and later Anglo-Saxon cremation cemeteries, for which the county is famous, form a broad ring around Lincoln itself, which has little evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity until the mid-seventh century. Lincoln and its hinterland are instead characterized by British practice, particularly metalwork, which is extremely unusual for eastern England. The city is recorded as a metropolitan see in AD 314, and there is archaeological evidence for Romano-British continuity at the church of St Paul-in-the-Bail.

Green favours a settlement model derived from Gildas, whereby the post-Roman British kings ('tyrants') of Lincoln directed and controlled Anglo-Saxon settlement in the county, potentially employing the migrants as mercenaries, although the argument that their major cremation cemeteries were located on strategic routes into the city is simplistically handled (pp. 88–89). Cemeteries do not equate to settlement, and the notion that even fortified sites such as Yarborough Camp somehow 'control' routes of communication (p. 89) evokes the armchair general drawing dots on maps. One of these 'tyrants' of Lincoln is identified with the King Arthur legend, whose spectacular victories *in regione Linnius* are recorded by Nennius; whilst it is easy to criticize the sport of Arthur-hunting, this section is handled critically (Chapter 3). It is accompanied by an intriguing reference, in the potentially sixth-century Northern British lament *Y Goddodin*, to the 'men of Lindsey' joining the grand alliance of British kingdoms, including Elmet, Aeron and Strathclyde, on their doomed expedition and fight at *Catreth* (modern Catterick). At its height, their kingdom is argued to have encompassed most of modern Lincolnshire, and to have had significant influence over smaller neighbouring kingdoms recorded in the *Tribal Hidage* document.

It is a shame that Green spends so little time placing this kingdom in its Iron Age and Roman contexts, and his book has some other lapses, too. For example, there is a tendency to treat negative evidence as fact, particularly regarding distributions of cemeteries and metalwork. The illustrations are inadequate, lacking even a topographic

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map of the county to orientate the reader: Chapter 4 centres on whether the boundary of Lindsey extended south of the Witham, but at no point is this river marked on any map, and few of the maps and plans have scales, meaning that Yarborough Camp could be anything from a garden feature to an earthwork visible from space. Nevertheless, this is a lively and convincing account of a neglected British kingdom, admirably multidisciplinary in approach and alive to questions of wider interest, such as Anglo-Saxon kingdom formation and the survival of Roman society after AD 410. It makes for a good story, engagingly told.

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