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Book Reviews



PEOPLE AND THE SEA: A MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AGENDA FOR ENGLAND. Edited by Jesse Ransley and Fraser Sturt, with Justin Dix, Jon Adams and Lucy Blue. Pp. xxi and 250, Illus 68. Council for British Archaeology (Research Report Series, **171**), 2013. Price: £30.00. ISBN 978 190277 193 9.

This eminently readable and informative volume is the product of an extensive project co-ordinated by the University of Southampton's Centre for Maritime Archaeology, supported by English Heritage through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, seeking to establish a 'Maritime and Marine Historic Research Framework' for England. It consists of eight chronological reviews characterizing the state of current knowledge and setting out a series of key research questions for each period, topped and tailed by an introduction on marine geoarchaeology and some brief conclusions. The project had a wide-ranging brief, reflected by the extensive and impressive cast of contributors, each bringing their own perspectives and areas of interest to the subject. The editors have commendably brought some structure to this potential Babel by consistently organizing each chapter around five common themes: coastal change; maritime settlement and marine exploitation; seafaring; maritime networks; and maritime identities and perceptions of maritime space. Of course, for some periods there is very little to say about some of these themes, and some sections are little more than speculation. Nevertheless, the overall result is an authoritative statement of current knowledge accompanied by a very useful (though by no means exhaustive) bibliography that will be of enormous value for those interested in the marine historic environment.

The key research questions outlined for each theme in each period naturally vary quite considerably according to quantity and character of the data, and can be both very specific and very general. Some common concerns emerge, however; the need for more information about port installations, for example, and the dearth of information about ship-building technology, particularly for the earlier periods. Michael Walsh emphasizes the sizeable lacunae that exist in our data regarding the types of vessels used; from the sewn plank technology of the Bronze Age, we have no other boat remains until the mid-second-century AD Blackfriars I ship from London. Predictive modelling and pro-active survey to locate more ancient boats may be a way forward to fill such gaps.

The book is attractively illustrated with many colour figures, and each chronological chapter is accompanied by a useful 'timeline' setting out the main events. The case studies that appear throughout the volume are well-chosen, though perhaps rather too summary to be very helpful, whilst at the same time there are many unexplained acronyms that will be meaningless to those not already familiar with the subject (e.g. 'AMAP1'? 'ETOP01'?). Inevitably, in a book of this complexity, there are a number of

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minor errors: for example, in the modern timeline, there are two King Edward VIII's (p. 186), the earlier of whom reigned until 1907 (Edward VII reigned until his death in 1910); the references cited for the Roman harbour at Dover relate to Richborough Castle (e.g. pp. 97, 101); and some references in the text did not make it to the bibliography. However, none of these errors present the reader with any insurmountable problems.

The publication of this volume is timely; the last decade or so has seen a burgeoning interest in protecting the marine historic environment in much of western Europe. Recent legislation had its genesis in the practicalities of managing the offshore historic environment; the research context of such 'maritime' archaeology is less well-developed and the move to develop research frameworks for the marine historic environment is warmly welcomed. However, there are some problems with this, and these are sometimes reflected in this volume. In the first instance, what is actually meant by the 'maritime historic environment' (p. xix)? Is it that part of the archaeological record that now lies under the sea? Or is it archaeology that directly related to the maritime world in the past? Both perspectives sit side-by-side here. Thus the flooded landscapes of Doggerland can be presented as 'maritime archaeology', even though they had little or no maritime dimension when they were once occupied. Likewise, places that once had an intimate connection with the sea now lie landlocked, far from any shore, such as the Roman Saxon Shore fort at Lyminge, in Kent. The methodology and complexity of studying archaeology in the marine environment is perhaps something different to that of studying maritime archaeology itself. Regarding the latter, to what extent can we disengage 'maritime' archaeology from archaeology more generally? This is a point touched on by a number of contributors, for example Fraser Sturt and Robert Van de Noort, who emphasize the need to integrate the research themes and concerns of both maritime and terrestrial archaeology. It is important that this broader view has been explicitly stated in the volume, which provides a welcome contribution to the development of a more holistic approach.

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