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Review of John Baker and Stuart Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage. Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age*, Leiden, Brill 2013

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This book presents the results of a three-year project entitled 'Beyond the Burghal Hidage: Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age', which was initiated in 2005. The project was devised to provide a systematic and multi-disciplinary study of Anglo-Saxon military organisation during the period 850-1066. Prior to this, studies of Anglo-Saxon defence have largely focused on the defensive fortifications listed in the 9th-10th century document, the 'Burghal Hidage'. This study demonstrates a clear wish to move beyond conventional discourse and investigate the wider 'military landscape'.

The book represents a thorough and much needed re-analysis of late Anglo-Saxon warfare, complementing other excellent publications such as Ryan Lavelle's recent re-analysis of the 9th-10th century Viking wars. A series of case studies are presented which investigate the archaeological and onomastic manifestations of conflict and warfare across a swathe of England. These focus on the landscapes of the Rivers Kennet, Thames and the Kent region. These provide a timely reminder to move beyond the study of single and specific sites of violence. Conflict comprises of a series of processes that resonate not just on the battlefield, but across entire landscapes. Wider aspects of conflict such as communications, fortification construction, the movement of armies and territorial consolidation and defence can all be equally informative in illuminating processes and changes taking place across England during the Viking Age.

Baker & Brookes firstly, however, contextualise the study by placing it within previously existing interpretational frameworks regarding late Saxon warfare. Chapter one succinctly and effectively justifies the study of civil defence. This is

followed by a summary of previous work which is in-depth and comprehensive, bringing together key threads of academic debate and an evaluation of contemporary historical documents. A short section on terminology serves to define exactly how the authors deal with certain problematic Old English terms such as *burh*. The authors highlight the inherent difficulty in using these terms to discuss site types which inevitably vary greatly in their morphology, layout and purpose.

Chapter two continues to build upon the observations made previously, though in this case discussion is much more focused on characterising civil defence. This is achieved through the discussion of the wide range of archaeological and onomastic evidence for fortifications and communicative networks. Discussion not only focuses on the specific period defined by the study, but includes the consideration of middle Saxon military organisation and how this resonates within later landscapes of conflict. Returning to the late 9th century and the fortifications of the Burghal Hidage themselves, the physical form of defences are considered and compared across Wessex and Mercia. Further debate includes the discussion of the function of these sites. As part of this, the discussion of Old English terms relating to fortifications is once again prevalent and the authors' comprehensive discussion communicates the inherent difficulties in creating associations between these. Other fortification types such as 'burgates' and towers are also considered, representing a move forward from the consideration of purely 'burghal' sites as significant locations of defence and power within regional landscapes. This encourages a more holistic understanding of the late Saxon period landscape. All of these sites are considered in terms of Anglo-Saxon strategy, drawing upon theories such as defence-in-depth to discuss and characterise defensive networks. The chapter concludes with a succinct discussion of the evidence and presents the authors' arguments that the burghal system emerged piecemeal or gradually out of earlier Mercian systems of defence.

Chapter three focuses on the identification of infrastructure and communicative networks. Whilst much of the discussion focuses on the use of place-names to identify contemporary roads, bridges, fords and signalling systems, relevant archaeological examples continue to illuminate and support the authors' arguments. Roman roads and so-called 'herepaths' are considered in their roles of facilitating the movement of groups across the landscape, though it is river crossings and the

control of movement along rivers themselves that receives much greater attention. Also discussed are beacon and signalling networks, which have again largely been inferred through the analysis of place-names and viewsheds. Once again, this discussion is clearly placed within the contexts of previous and existing research. A number of possible beacon networks are considered, though it is striking how little physical archaeological investigation has taken place. The authors recognise the uncertainties involved with considering place-names, which themselves cannot be conclusively attributed to the late Saxon period. It is also noted that sites not possessing place-names related to signalling may still have been used for such purposes. Discussion is subsequently taken forward to consider mustering points and their use in allowing armies to gather in the field, though this feels slightly disjointed and could perhaps have benefitted from being more thoroughly contextualised with previous material. Given that a single site of Viking Age battle has yet to be identified archaeologically, however, this issue must be considered crucial – it is battle sites that to some extent bind together various aspects of civil defence.

The next three chapters present case studies of the regions of the rivers Kennet and Thames regions and Kent. The Kennet region is subject to focus due to it being an important zone of West Saxon defence against Viking raids both in the 9th and 11th centuries. The archaeological and onomastic evidence discussed earlier in the book is applied here, with civil defence being thoroughly contextualised within both late Saxon and earlier defensive contexts. A number of fortifications and burhs such as Bath, Avebury, Chippenham and Calne are discussed, demonstrating the range of archaeological evidence for fortifications and civil defence. The use and, in some cases, reconstruction and reuse of these sites following earlier periods of occupation is contextualised within discussion of road networks and communicative capabilities across the region. It is concluded that the Kennet defences evolved *ad hoc* during the mid-9th century and continued in this way until the early- to mid-10th century.

The Thames region is and has always been a crucial artery into the heart of England and as such discussion first considers travel along the river and place-names relating to landing points or trading settlements. The region is also placed within its strategic context, with the various components of civil defence being broken down

and applied to the immediate landscape. A number of insights are provided as to how this undoubtedly important region was defended, with analysis of burghal distribution, the Roman road network and the river itself illuminating how movement along these latter communicative networks might have been controlled and managed. Crucially, a portion of discussion is also given over to the consideration of the offensive role of installations involved in civil defence, highlighting their flexibility and evolution of use. The uses of signalling and beacon networks are also returned to, serving to further tie the archaeological and onomastic evidence into a coherent military system. Conversely to the Kennet region, it is concluded that there is some superficial evidence of central planning in the Thames area, though the evidence nevertheless points to a non-uniform approach to defence and the construction or reuse of fortifications.

The defence of Kent presents a suitable context for the final case study of the book considering the frequent Viking incursions that the region suffered in the late 9th century. These are contextualised within the discussion with regards to the as yet un-conclusively located *Burghal Hidage* fortification of *Eorpeburnan* and Alfred's reactions to Viking raids in the 890s. Following this, the authors once again assess a number of major fortifications such as Canterbury and Rochester, though unlike the other case studies Kent allows for the consideration of ports and coastal defences. Kent is also relatively anonymous given that it is largely omitted from the *Burghal Hidage*. Indeed, the authors note that even the language used in relation to observation and signalling is more diverse than in the west. It is therefore concluded that civil defence in Kent may have been regionally controlled, with centralised investment in new defences taking place only at the very end of the 9th century.

The final chapter summarises the information discussed previously from a number of different themes. Firstly, the evolution of Anglo-Saxon civil defence is charted across the 8th-late 10th centuries, with the Viking incursions clearly precipitating defensive measures during the reign of Alfred of Wessex. The roles of civil defence in state formation and the development of territorial power are also discussed, demonstrating how conflict has the ability to resonate within wider socio-political contexts. The authors further consider how civil defence might be a medium through which to further understand pre-industrial societies and highlight a number of avenues for

future research that might augment our knowledge of the Viking Age. This book therefore in many ways thoroughly grounds our knowledge in late Saxon defensive structures and organisation whilst also representing a starting point from which multiple avenues of research and investigation might be pursued. Discussion is well balanced, coherent and enjoyable to read, whilst the extensive use of illustrations and maps serves to further illuminate the reader's understanding of the material. This text is invaluable to historians and archaeologists alike and should certainly feature as a central publication in future reading lists and bibliographies.