



## Book Reviews

### **ENCLOSING SPACE, OPENING NEW GROUND: IRON AGE STUDIES FROM SCOTLAND TO MAINLAND EUROPE EDITED BY TANJA ROMANKIEWICZ, MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ-GÖTZ, GARY LOCK AND OLIVER BÜCHSENSCHÜTZ**

*Oxbow Books, Oxford. 2019. 189 pages, 91 B&W and col figs, 9 table, 1 appendix, hb, ISBN 978-1-78925-201-9, £55.00*

This important new volume forms a Festschrift for Professor Ian Ralston of Edinburgh University and includes 15 papers and an introductory article by the editors. The volume also includes an impressive list of Ralston's publications, ranging from 1974 to the present. It explores the topic of Iron Age enclosures, a theme upon which Ralston has focused since his involvement in his first excavation in 1965. The geographic distribution of the papers reflects the prime location of Ralston's archaeological research in Scotland and France, with additional papers from countries in which he has built strong academic connections.

This volume is not an attempt to provide a synthetic coverage of the concept of enclosing space during the Iron Age; instead it constitutes a series of individual studies of related topics and includes several papers that highlight new discoveries as well as recent trends in scholarship. The papers include a number of significant studies, mainly published in English but with two in French. A reoccurring theme, building upon a recent trend in research, is upon how enclosures were used to create, maintain and sometimes deconstruct memories. The introduction, in addition to introducing the papers, outlines the rationale behind the selection of topics, defining the way that enclosures are a common and distinctive feature of the European Iron Age. These include fortifications, enclosures and field systems; such enclosures define space at a range of scales from territories, to settlements, sanctuaries, political centres and burials. A short section at the end of the Introduction summarises how the papers contribute to broader knowledge of the enclosing of space and the breaking of new ground. Contrasts between studies include the degree to which classical texts can assist with the understanding of archaeological materials and the ways in which general interpretations derived from settlement distributions can be supplemented and challenged by more detailed archaeological research and excavation, particularly with regard to dating.

The individual papers are divided into the themes of (1) building enclosures, (2) creating settlement communities and (3) marking settlement landscapes through time. The third of these

themes resonates with many of the papers, exploring ideas of the roles of boundaries in creating and manipulating memories. The papers address archaeological examples drawn from across Britain (1), and from France (4), Germany (2), Scotland (4), Spain (2), with an additional paper on Eurasia. It is impossible to do justice to all the papers in this substantial volume in a review and I will draw out a few important issues and contrasts and comparisons between different contributions.

First, it is interesting to see that there is a lack of consensus about the role of conflict and the function of defences. David Rose and Manuel Fernández-Götz explore the concept of 'memoryscapes', pointing to the increasing indications from archeological excavations in Germany and France for intertribal warfare prior to the expansion of Rome into western Europe (cf. Fernández Götz & Roymans 2018). Sophie Krausz addresses the assault ramp built by Julius Caesar's soldiers at the Gallic *oppidum* of *Avaricum* in 52 BC, where there is direct evidence for a Roman siege on an Iron Age fortification which supports Caesar's comments on attacks on Iron Age strongholds in the *Gallic War*. Recent research has begun to emphasise the discovery of archaeological traces of military actions under Caesar in Gaul, as addressed in another new volume (Fitzpatrick & Haselgrove 2019). In Britain, there is relatively little indication that Iron Age peoples attacked each other's hillforts and also relatively little to indicate that the Romans sieged hillforts and *oppida*. This information is discussed by David Breeze in the Ralston Festschrift, exploring the treatment of Iron Age defended settlements in Britain during the Roman invasion and arguing that defended Iron Age settlements only rarely appear to have been sieged by Roman forces. Indeed, he observes that many hillforts in Scotland had probably been abandoned by the time of the Roman invasion.

We have had very little recent excavation of hillforts in Scotland, however, and Derek Hamilton and Colin Haselgrove explore radiocarbon dating of enclosed settlements, observe that rather than representing permanent occupation, these structures might often relate to some periodic assemblies (p.117). This would mean that the sites of hillforts could remain significant to local communities even if they were no longer being occupied or maintained (Hingley forthcoming).

Second, the topic of terminology is raised by Breeze's paper. In northern Britain, hillforts are regularly titled '*oppida*', yet across the south the problematic term '*oppidum*' is reserved for the partially-enclosed sites that characterise the Late Iron Age (including *Verulamium*, *Camulodunum*, *Calleva* and Bagendon). Strat Halliday asks the question of how many hillforts there are in Scotland (p.37). He notes that it seems curious to ask such a question when data for the *Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland* has been available online for over a year. This innovative *Atlas* was the result of a project directed by Ralston and one of the Festschrift's editors, Gary Lock. Yet, depending on what criteria are adopted to define 'hillfort' the number of sites that fall into the category will vary, as Halliday observes. Many hillforts in Scotland are no

larger in scale than sites that would be addressed as enclosed settlements in England. Collis in the *Festschrift* (p.65) also reflects on comparable terminological difficulties, observing that the enclosed site at Oram's Arbour (Winchester) does not clearly fit either into the category of hillfort or that of *oppidum*. In addition, as Collis observes, the urbanised *oppida* described by Caesar in Gaul in the 1st century BC appear rather different from the sites termed as *oppida* by archaeologists in southern Britain.

Terminology is evidently an issue that arises from the regional character of our research agendas. There is no agreed lexicon for the types of enclosed sites that typify the Western European Iron Age, as the lengthy debates about the value and currency of the term *oppidum* illustrates (Moore 2017). Scholarship that crosses geographical boundaries, such as the contributions to this *Festschrift*, offer one viable means to start to address such terminological issues.

Third, models of Iron Age society also differ between different areas of western Europe. Ian Armit explores settlement in south-eastern Scotland, drawing on the results from the recently published work at Broxmouth (East Lothian). He uses this discussion to argue that Iron Age society in Scotland was not in any way hierarchical but was typified by densely settled communities living in what he terms 'anarchy'. Accounts of ideas about heterarchical Iron Age societies across Europe are explored in detail in another recently published volume (Currás & Sastre 2020), which contains another paper by Armit. Many archaeologists in Britain appear to think that society was mainly characterised by heterarchy. The Late Iron Age in Britain, in these terms, witnesses some 'experiments in kingship', as temporary kingdoms arise.

Across much of the Continent, ideas about Iron Age social organisation continue to emphasise the growth of social inequality during the period at which Rome is expanding into these territories, including several of the papers published in the *Festschrift*. For Rüdiger Krause, writing about the hillfort of Mount Ipf (southern Germany) the archaeological information, including the tumuli, indicate a significant long-term Iron Age 'power centre'. Was Britain really so different from Gaul at this time? Or are the models that we develop still reflecting the relative scarcity of burials in Britain until the later stages of the Iron Age?

This substantial volume is well illustrated and error free. It forms a fitting testament to Ian Ralston's continuing career. One slight criticism, which is common to many edited books produced by Oxbow, is the absence of an index. Perhaps more might also have been done to pull the arguments included in the individual papers into some form of summary at the end of the volume. Nevertheless, the publication of this *Festschrift* is very much to be welcomed.

## References

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