



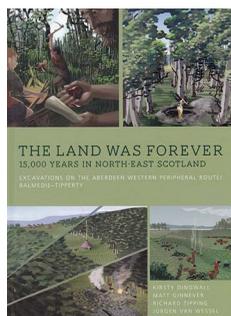
New Book Chronicle

Claire Nesbitt

The disproportionate scholarly attention directed towards the prehistory of southern Britain—and Wessex in particular—is long-standing. The recent arrival on the *Antiquity* review shelves of several substantial excavation monographs and edited volumes, however, illustrates how this southern-centric gaze is shifting, with the publication of both vibrant and highly productive research- and developer-led excavations in northern England and Scotland.

The volumes reviewed here represent the results of research excavations and mitigation for infrastructure projects, reporting individual sites and explorations of archaeological landscapes. They represent multiple seasons of fieldwork and painstaking post-excavation work; they also represent—particularly in the case of the monographs reviewed here—models of best practice.

KIRSTY DINGWALL, MATT GINNEVER, RICHARD TIPPING, JÜRGEN VAN WESSEL & DON WILSON. 2019. *The land was forever: 15 000 years in north-east Scotland. Excavations on the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty*. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7857-0988-3 hardback £40.



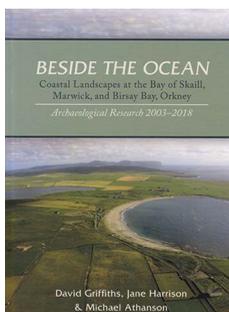
The land was forever is the outcome of the investigations undertaken to mitigate the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) road scheme in north-east Scotland. The volume is the fruit of five years' fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. This publication is informed by the research agendas of the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF), and synthesises the results and implications, with the full technical and specialist reports available online through the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).

An introductory chapter (1) by Kirsty Dingwall and Don Wilson establishes the scope of the project and its aims and objectives; broadly, these are to reduce the impact of the road scheme on the archaeological resource and to record and interpret the archaeology in the affected areas. The chapter includes an overview of the archaeology of Aberdeenshire, a region rich in archaeological heritage—particularly early prehistoric sites—but one which had seen limited excavation. Richard Tipping provides the geological and topographical background to the region, situating landscape at the forefront of the investigations. Following this lead, in a relatively novel approach, the volume is organised by landscape type (e.g. coastal plain, river valley) rather than chronologically, following the route of the bypass from south to north. Sites excavated include single-phase sites and others—such as Milltimber on the River Dee (Chapter 2)—that represent archaeological landscapes with millennia of activity. In the case of Milltimber, there is evidence that the landscape was in use from the Upper Palaeolithic, with technologies dating to 13 000–10 000 BC, through the Mesolithic, Neolithic, the fourth century AD (possible Roman military ovens), and into the early medieval period and later.

Chapter 2 sets the bar high; the subsequent chapters maintain this standard. The excavations at Nether Beanshill, Gairnhill and Chapel of Stoneywood between the Rivers Dee and Don are the focus of Chapter 3 by Jürgen van Wessel. These investigations reveal a landscape of Bronze Age life and death, with roundhouses, a cremation complex and a burnt mound. Chapter 4 presents the excavations of Standingstones, a Mesolithic (c. 7000 BC) site on the edge of Kirkhill Forest, near Aberdeen airport. Environmental analyses reveal charred wood, seeds and hazel nutshells which are used to identify the range of foods in the Mesolithic diet, although the study reinforces the difficulty of this process. The Standingstones site adds to the growing body of evidence for Mesolithic sites in the UK with possible structures, although whether these were semi-permanent or simple, temporary shelters remains unclear. The hearth, charred plant remains, lithics and pits/postholes point to the interpretation of a small, temporary upland camp that was probably used for short but repeated visits. Van Wessel also presents the site of Goval, on the banks of the River Don (Chapter 5), reporting an area with evidence for use during the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and seventh to eighth century AD. A series of pits of Mesolithic and Neolithic date at the sites of Blackdog and Wester Hatton indicate long-lived settlement activity on the coastal plain that is otherwise archaeologically invisible. Evidence for roundhouses and additional pits at Wester Hatton suggest that the area was also used as a settlement in the Bronze Age, possibly extending beyond the excavated area. This chapter considers the enduring attraction of the coastal zone throughout prehistory.

Concluding thoughts on the results of this extensive project are offered in Chapter 7, in which the authors reflect on the logistics of large infrastructure projects, the underpinning methodologies, and how investigations such as this can fundamentally change our understanding of the archaeology of a region. Discussion is detailed and tied closely to interpretation of environmental changes and landscape development over 15 000 years. The data are clearly and comprehensively recorded and presented. With high-quality site plans, section drawings and aerial photographs, a radiocarbon chronology, specialist reports, artefact illustrations, geological maps and even artistic reconstructions of the changing landscape, the volume is a model of best practice for developer-led excavation reports.

DAVID GRIFFITHS, JANE HARRISON & MICHAEL ATHANSON. 2019. *Beside the ocean. Coastal landscapes at the Bay of Skail, Marwick, and Birsay Bay, Orkney: archaeological research 2003–18*. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7892-5096-1 hardback £45.



Our second volume for consideration also reports on a significant campaign of archaeological research and excavation in Scotland—this time on the Orkney Islands. The monograph presents the results of 15 years of archaeological research at coastal sites on the north-west coast of mainland Orkney, specifically the Bay of Skail, Marwick and Birsay Bay. This is an area best known for the Neolithic site of Skara Brae, but which also has much to offer for our understanding of the Norse occupation of the region.

An introduction and discussion by David Griffiths bookend a vast range of specialist chapters by other contributors detailing methodologies and small finds reports, each supported by

high-quality figures and colour illustrations. Griffith's Introduction summarises the landscape and history of Orkney, outlining the geological formation of the region and its topography, and providing some historical background to situate the research in its broadest context. This chapter introduces the Birsay-Skaill Landscape Archaeology Project that began in 2003, supported by Historic Environment Scotland. As with many archaeological projects around the coasts of Scotland and the Scottish islands, one of the aims was to assess the vulnerability of archaeological sites to coastal erosion and, in this case, to model the archaeological potential of the entire coastal zone. The project focused on the low-lying hinterlands of the bays of Skaill, Marwick and Birsay.

Chapter 2 details past archaeological research in the locality—much of which has focused on the well-known World Heritage site of Skara Brae and the causewayed island Brough of Birsay—including excavations undertaken in the eighteenth century by George Low and Sir Joseph Banks (the latter better known for his involvement in Captain James Cook's circumnavigation of the globe). This is followed by a chapter (3) detailing the landscape surveys, which utilised geophysics, topographical survey and ground-penetrating radar. As well as identifying the sites of potential archaeological interest, the large scale of the surveys helped to reveal the extent of sites and characterise their archaeological signature. This, in turn, enabled other topographically similar sites to be recognised or excluded by their magnetic signatures and thus streamlined the process of selecting areas of interest for excavation.

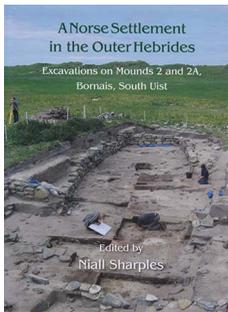
A full justification for the trench locations, together with the mitigations that were necessary to excavate successfully and safely in a landscape of windblown sand, are presented in Chapter 4. Here, the excavation methodology is outlined along with taphonomic factors and detailed descriptions of the trenches and site phases, together with plans, section drawings and photographs. The excavations targeted Castle of Snusgar and East Mound (Viking-Age longhouses) in the Bay of Skaill; a vertical section of an eroding beach-cliff at Marwick that revealed Viking–Late Norse structures; and two test pits at Buckquoy, Birsay that investigated geophysical anomalies, but yielded no dating material. Much datable material culture was recovered elsewhere, however, and this is comprehensively presented by Derek Hamilton, Anthony Krus, Jean-Luc Schwenninger, Jean Harrison and David Griffiths in Chapter 5.

The specialist reports (Chapters 6–24) are too numerous to cover in detail here. Suffice it to say that the sample processing and finds, including geoarchaeology, geochemical, archaeobotanical, faunal, stone, metal, glass, combs and ceramics, are all afforded detailed treatment. In addition, the Skaill Viking-Age silver hoard and Viking grave discovered in the nineteenth century are revisited in the context of the new discoveries (Chapters 21 & 22), and Tom Muir provides analysis of the 'Fin king' folktale, which refers to the Bay of Skaill (Chapter 24). Griffiths's discussion (Chapter 25) brings together the conclusions of the previous chapters in order to understand the significance of this coastal zone in the Viking and Late Norse periods. As well as discovering new sites, the survey team also revisited known sites, such as the chapel site at Marwick. This provided additional context by revealing the extent of the nearby settlement mound and re-establishing the chapel in its landscape. Dates from the settlement mound, which may point to the Pictish–Viking transition, lead Griffiths to argue for the importance of Marwick in wider debates concerning the early Viking presence on Orkney and whether there was continuity of settlement across that

transition. The geophysical survey at the Bay of Skail reveals that this area also offers “extensive potential for further in-depth understanding of the Prehistoric and pre-Viking landscape” (p. 309). From this detailed narrative a picture emerges of a landscape at a transitional moment, when people were moving away from the coastal margins to higher inland areas.

The volume reflects the sustained effort of a 15-year campaign and the enthusiasm of the authors for this island landscape. As Andrew Greig states in the Foreword: “It pulls together many excavations, a multiplicity of sites, markers and human stories, landscape, deep time and folk history. It is the science of archaeology raised to a humanist level” (p. vii).

NIAL SHARPLES (ed.). 2019. *A Norse settlement in the Outer Hebrides: excavations on Mounds 2 and 2A, Bornais, South Uist*. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7892-5046-6 hardback £35.



Moving from the Northern Isles to the west and the Hebrides, the next volume also investigates a Norse settlement mound, this time one of the largest known rural Norse settlements in Britain: at Bornais, South Uist. The Bornais settlement is a series of mounds on the coastal machair (the grassy plain made fertile by deposits of sand formed from calcium-rich shell). The settlement is on the western coast of South Uist, facing the Atlantic Ocean. Mound 3 and mound 1 of the settlement have been published previously (Sharples 2005, 2012); this volume focuses on mounds 2 and 2A, which are substantially different in character to the others.

While Sharples does not restate the motivations of the excavations, which are detailed in the previous publications, Chapter 1 does offer a brief history of research to contextualise the excavations reported in this volume. This also includes a history of the exploration of Norse settlement in Scotland, with discussion of some of the problems with understanding the occupation of sites (including poor preservation, complex building sequences, incomplete excavation and inadequate publication), and an overview of Viking and later Norse houses in Scotland and the North Atlantic. This first chapter is sufficiently detailed to provide a broad understanding of the site and its context within North Atlantic Norse archaeology for the non-specialist reader.

Whereas in the previous two volumes the specialist reports are largely separated from the discussion, this volume weaves the two together to very good effect, providing nuanced reports of the separate phases. Chapters detail the site chronologically by phase, beginning with the earliest Late Iron Age phase (seventh–eighth century AD) (Chapter 2). This phase includes limited, but clear, evidence for Late Iron Age occupation, including small finds such as combs, pins and ceramics, and secure dating provided by radiocarbon assays ranging from AD 590–770 to AD 700–870. The Norse activity, beginning with the construction of house 1—probably a large longhouse—dates to the late ninth or early tenth century AD. The evidence from this site prompts reflection on the understanding of the Norse colonisation of the islands. The results of this phase of the site—particularly the pottery and the

multiple pits beneath the floor of house 1—suggest that there may have been some continuity of extant island populations who had influence in the Norse period. This suggests a more complex colonisation process at Bornais than is evident in other parts of the Norse Atlantic province.

Chapter 3 considers the early Norse activity on mound 2A that was contemporaneous with house 1 on mound 2. Mound 2A appears to be an area of cultivation, and a suite of results from analyses of soil micromorphology, carbonised plant material and faunal remains reveal much about the nature of the land use. Ard marks in the early Norse cultivation levels raise questions as to the types of subsistence practices on the site, as evidence from Cille Pheadair (also on South Uist and just south of Bornais) reveals that mould-board ploughs were in use contemporaneously.

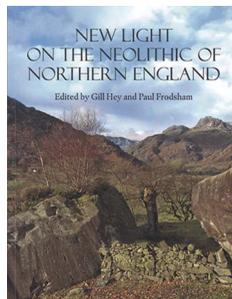
House 1 was substantially reconstructed in the middle Norse period to form a second house (house 2); this was architecturally important, as it was constructed with squared stone—a resource that was probably scarce on the machair. The source of the stone remains uncertain but seems likely to have come from some distance. Also significant at house 2 is the quantity of material recovered from the floors: an unusually large quantity of objects compared with similar structures. The author speculates that this could be the result of the death of the head of the family in an inauspicious manner that led to the house being abandoned, or that it may represent a period of conspicuous consumption. Neither scenario sufficiently explains the evidence, however, and the author leaves the question open for subsequent publications.

Chapters 5 & 6 continue the analysis of the middle Norse period, focusing on the transition phase at mound 2 (Chapter 5) and middle Norse activity at mound 2A (Chapter 6). These chapters highlight the contrast between the different types of contemporaneous activity on mounds 2 and 2A. The reoccupation of house 2 on mound 2 in the middle Norse period reflects a period of perhaps lower-status occupation. This corresponds with similar patterns at Cille Pheadair, which may represent a short period of disruption and population decline. Mound 2A, by contrast, appears to represent a short but specialised period of activity that centred around ancillary structures and included industrial activity involving two kilns; the purpose of these is unclear, but may have been related to crop processing.

The late Norse period saw a revitalisation of settlement on mound 2 (Chapter 7), with house 3 being constructed in the mid–late thirteenth century AD. The construction and spatial arrangement of house 3 is consistent with other contemporaneous structures. The same phase at mound 2A reveals evidence for both domestic and ancillary structures, along with middens (Chapter 8), and appears to represent a relatively low-status settlement. Additional chapters (9 & 10) deal with peripheral stratigraphic sequences and final occupation of the settlement, before the results of the dating sampling strategy and carbon and nitrogen stable isotope analysis are presented in Chapter 11. Chapter 12 compares depositional differences between mound 2 and 2A to highlight the very different roles of these two mounds in the settlement and to discuss these findings. The volume closes with a discussion by the editor that considers the wider significance of the discoveries at Bornais, including the “invaluable picture of the domestic architecture of Norse and late medieval settlement in the period from the tenth up to the fourteenth century” (p. 591). This is a thorough and engaging book and the final planned volume in the series will undoubtedly be much anticipated.

Levelling up

GILL HEY & PAUL FRODSHAM (ed.). 2020. *New light on the Neolithic of northern England*. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-7892-5266-8 paperback £38.



Deriving from a 2016 conference on the Neolithic of northern England, and expanded to include additional contributions, *New light on the Neolithic of northern England* addresses a notable gap in the coverage of Neolithic archaeology in the UK: that of northern England. Frequently considered a ‘backwater’, or overlooked because of its less accessible landscapes, the region has seen less archaeological investigation, and indeed less coverage of the research that does take place when compared with more southerly areas. This volume aims to redress the balance and spotlight the rich Neolithic heritage that exists in northern England.

After an introductory chapter by editors Gill Hey and Paul Frodsham, which outlines the importance of northern England in Neolithic archaeology, Richard Bradley and Aaron Watson revisit the Langdale stone axes in light of new dating evidence. This contribution comprises a retrospective summary of interpretations of the axes, from the initial investigations in the mid-1980s and the 1993 distribution study, to more recent research that has revised the chronology of the Cumbrian axes based on re-evaluation of associated ceramic assemblages; newly discovered rock art at the Langdale complex; and additional radiocarbon dates that suggest an earlier and shorter period of extraction for the Langdale axes. Now believed to post-date axe production, the pecked motifs at Copt Howe, Great Langdale, have close parallels with Irish megalithic art. Other Cumbrian rock art also uses motifs common to the Irish repertoire. This chapter resituates Langdale as a special place, with meaning that went beyond the practicalities of lithic resources, which reached a broader and more distant network than previously recognised, and had long-term significance in the prehistoric landscape.

There is broad geographical coverage of the north of England, and while the north-west features heavily (Fraser Brown; Seren Griffiths; Helen Evans, Antony Dickson & Denise Druce; Paul Frodsham; Al Oswald & Constance Durgeat), two chapters by Clive Waddington and Stephen Sherlock, respectively, spotlight the Neolithic archaeology in north-east England, with Waddington presenting 25 new radiocarbon dates that shed light on a link between environmental change and settlement in Neolithic Britain and Ireland, and Sherlock sharing interim results from excavations at Street House, an Early Neolithic structure in north-east Yorkshire (see also Sherlock 2021). The Street House site has yielded not only dating evidence for Early Neolithic human activity but has also demonstrated that the Tees Valley was a focus for such activity intermittently from the Late Mesolithic to Late Neolithic periods, and was a more significant location than previously thought.

Taking more broad-ranging geographical approaches are chapters considering enclosures (Al Oswald & Mark Edmonds); rock art (Kate Sharpe); long cairns and barrows (Yvonne Luke); ‘hengiform’ monuments (Stewart Ainsworth, David McOmish, Al Oswald & Andrew Payne); and Bell Beaker groups (Andrew Fitzpatrick). The volume avoids respecting the

anachronistic border between England and Scotland with a chapter by Julian Thomas that considers monumentality in south-west Scotland during the Neolithic, and also a contribution offering a Scottish perspective on the period in which Alison Sheridan applies extensive knowledge of Neolithic Scotland to north-west England to understand links between the two regions. This is a welcome volume that rightly showcases some of the UK's most important and valuable Neolithic archaeology.

Recent years have seen an increase in the currency of synthetic and more general archaeological volumes. While essential to archaeological understanding, these volumes have been in part a response—in the UK at least—to the Research Evaluation Framework (REF) and the associated pressures on university-based archaeologists to publish interpretative accounts and syntheses. Although excavation monographs are often rated highly in such a system, they can necessarily take decades to produce and are certainly the work of more than a single REF cycle. Volumes such as those reviewed here demonstrate the critical importance of such detailed publications (including methodologies, scientific analyses and specialist reports) in terms of documenting the archaeological record and our understanding of the broader context of local, regional or national archaeology. The examples reviewed here clearly demonstrate this important function, providing thorough analyses of multiple datasets and specialist reports, as well as discussing the wider context and significance of sites. The authors, editors and contributors are to be congratulated and commended on bringing these excellent volumes to publication.

References

SHARPLES, N.M. 2005. *A Norse farmstead in the Outer Hebrides: excavations at mound 3, Bornais, South Uist*. Oxford: Oxbow.
– 2012. *A Late Iron Age farmstead in the Outer Hebrides: excavations at mound 1, Bornais, South Uist*. Oxford: Oxbow.

SHERLOCK, S.J. 2021. Early Neolithic salt production at Street House, Loftus, north-east England. *Antiquity* 95: 648–69.
<https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2021.25>

Books received

This list includes all books received between 1 July 2021 and 31 August 2021. Those featuring at the beginning of New Book Chronicle have, however, not been duplicated in this list. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its subsequent review in *Antiquity*.

Anatolia, Levant and the Middle East

ARLETA KOWALEWSKA. *Bathhouses in Iudaea, Syria-Palaestina and Provincia Arabia from Herod the Great to the Umayyads*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-657-4 paperback \$60.
SARAH LANGE-WEBER. *Das Totenmahl in Syrien im 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.: eine Untersuchung zur*

Bedeutung, Symbolik und Tradition eines altorientalischen Konzepts in philologischer, archäologischer und religionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive am Beispiel von Mari, Qatna und Ugarit. 2021. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz; 978-3-447-11585-8 hardback €148.

Britain and Ireland

MICHAEL FULFORD. *Silchester revealed: the Iron Age and Roman town of Calleva*. 2021. Macclesfield: Windgather; 978-1-911188-83-4 paperback £16.99.

PATRICIA LONG, PAUL O'KEEFE & ISABEL BENNETT (ed.). *Vale of Tralee: the archaeology of the N22 Tralee Bypass*. 2020. Dublin: Wordwell; 978-1-911633-19-8 paperback €25.

CHRISTOPHER D. MORRIS & RACHEL C. BARROWMAN (ed.). *The Birsay Bay Project, volume 3: the Brough of Birsay, Orkney: investigations 1954–2014*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-607-9 hardback £55.

The Classical world

JOHN BENNETT (ed.). *Representations: material and immaterial modes of communication in the Bronze Age Aegean*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-641-3 paperback \$59.99.

IOANNA MOUTAFI. *Towards a social bioarchaeology of the Mycenaean period: a biocultural analysis of human remains from the Voudeni cemetery, Achaea, Greece*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-482-2 paperback \$59.99.

European pre- and protohistory

BARBARA AMBRUSTER *et al.* *Une résidence de la noblesse gauloise n° 112: le camp de Saint-Symphorien à Paule (Côtes-d'Armor)*. 2021. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme; 978-2-7351-2558-6 hardback €76.

RICHARD BRADLEY. *Temporary palaces: the Great House in European prehistory*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-661-1 paperback \$25.

JOSÉ EDUARDO M. DE MEDEIROS. *Hortfunde der Spätbronze- und Früheisenzeit: ein prozesslogischer Paradigmawechsel*. 2021. Leiden: Sidestone; 9789464280067 eBook Open Access.

LIN FOXHALL (ed.). *Interrogating networks: investigating networks of knowledge in antiquity*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-627-7 paperback \$24.95.

MANOLES MANOLEDAKES (ed.). *Peoples in the Black Sea region from the archaic to the Roman period: proceedings of the 3rd international workshop on the Black Sea in antiquity, held in Thessaloniki, 21–23 September 2018*. 2021. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78969-867-1 paperback £35.

Mediterranean archaeology

GABRIELLA LONGHITANO. *Textile activity and cultural identity in Sicily between the Late Bronze Age and archaic period*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-599-7 paperback £38.

CHRISTOPHER PRESCOTT, *et al.* *Trinacria: 'an island outside time': international archaeology in Sicily*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-591-1 hardback £55.

The Roman world

MARISA BONAMICI & ELENA SORGE (ed.). *Velathri Volaterrae: la città etrusca e il municipio romano*. 2021. Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider; 978-88-7689-329-2 paperback €109.

Heritage, conservation and museums

JESSICA J. CHRISTIE. *Earth politics and intangible heritage: three case studies in the Americas*. 2021. Gainesville: University Press of Florida; 978-0-8130-6693-6 hardback \$95.

JES WIENBERG. *Heritopia: World Heritage and modernity*. 2021. Lund: Lund University Press; 978-9-1984-6993-6 eBook Open Access.

General

UMBERTO ALBARELLA *et al.* (ed.). *Themes in Old World zooarchaeology: from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-534-8 hardback £60.

GIACOMO BARDELLI & RAIMON GRAELLS
I. FABREGAT (ed.). *Ancient weapons: new research perspectives on weapons and warfare*. 2021. Mainz: RGZM; 978-3-7954-3676-6 paperback €45.

JUAN CARLOS MORENO GARCÍA (ed.). *Markets and exchanges in pre-modern and traditional societies*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-611-6 hardback £45.

JAN M. GJERDE & MARI S. ARNTZEN (ed.). *Perspectives on differences in rock art*. 2021. Sheffield: Equinox; 978-1-78179-919-2 eBook £110.

NICOLA LANERI (ed.). *The sacred body: materializing the divine through human remains in antiquity*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-518-8 hardback £50.

HANNAH V. MATTSON (ed.). *Personal adornment and the construction of identity: a global archaeological perspective*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-595-9 paperback \$50.

APRIL NOWELL. *Growing up in the ice age: fossil and archaeological evidence of the lived lives of Plio-Pleistocene children*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-294-1 paperback £38.

LUCY TIMBRELL (ed.). *Conversations in human evolution, volume 2*. 2021. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78969-948-7 eBook Open Access.

Other

IAN BEGG. *Lost worlds of ancient and modern Greece. Gilbert Bagnani: the adventures of a young Italo-Canadian archaeologist in Greece, 1921–1924*. 2020. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78969-452-9 hardback £25.