

Timothy Darvill, Andrew David, Seren Griffiths, Jonathan Hart, Heather James, Ken Murphy and James Rackham *Timeline: The Archaeology of the South Wales Gas Pipeline* (Cotswold Archaeology Monography 13, 2020) xvi, 214, col, b/w ill, maps, A4 Hardback, £20, [ISBN: 9780993454578]

This volume contains a detailed overview of the archaeological discoveries made in 2005-7 along the two sections of the length of the South Wales Gas Pipeline from Milford Haven Liquefied Gas terminal in Pembrokeshire to Tirley in Gloucestershire where it connected with the National Transmission System. The construction was undertaken in the direction of the gas flow, in three sections Cotswold Archaeology being responsible for the first two ending at Brecon. Network Archaeology was the contractor for the Brecon to Tirley link and reported separately. Soil was stripped 15-20m across as an 'easement' to lay the pipeline and make access for vehicles and archaeologically was seen as an evaluation trench 317km long, thereby giving a random selection of sites along the route and their relationship to a variety of landscapes. While the pipeline was routed away from known monuments, many new sites were discovered giving an indication of an unexpected wider distribution of their function and age. However, in such a narrow transect few sites could be excavated in their entirety and the results therefore have to remain provisional in both the local and wider contexts. The exception was the surprise discovery of a henge at Vaynor in Carmarthenshire which was completely explored. The pipeline was also an important opportunity to undertake samples of ancient plant remains, especially pollen which provided information on the changing environment and economy across the route.

There were four non-intrusive stages along the whole length investigating the archaeology of the proposed pipeline route. A reconnaissance assessment using the HER's aerial photographs and other types of historic document, along with geophysical, field walking and earthwork surveys which indicated which sites should be targeted for interventions. These were investigated with trial trenches and, if the results were significant, subjected to excavation or watching briefs. The Cotswold Archaeology sites are listed in an appendix to this volume, and Network Archaeology's 2013 report is in the Archaeology Data Service Library (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1035750>). One can only but admire the overcoming of physical challenges at some locations along the route such as at Mynydd Myddfai on the Black Mountain where due to the

area being a Site of Special Scientific Interest 'and vehicles were forbidden', all equipment had to be carried across the moorland.

The chapters are arranged in chronological order and are focussed on the whole of the pipeline's course. With so many sites to discuss along a narrow strip of the landscape the text can be dense at times and tightly focussed on the local area although each author does relate their period to the regional and national scale as well as contemporary research, all of which provide a valuable synthesis of the results from the project. There are clear maps of each section with significant sites marked and photographed in detail. Where a site has two phases, they are designated 'key sites' such as the unsuspected henge at Vaynor and its later use as a ritual Roman site, or the Late Iron Age hillfort and an early medieval iron working site in Pembrokeshire. These have reconstructions of each phase and images of how they are related in terms of stratigraphy. In the Brecon to Tirley section the sites of late Iron Age and Roman periods were chanced upon far more frequently than those of other periods indicating a greater occupation than previously thought. There were several instances of continuity of Iron Age sites into the early Roman period, but these were evidenced only by ditches of enclosures. It is salutary to note that in the assemblages of locally made Severn Valley ware there was a preponderance of tankards apparently, a very West Country phenomenon presumably reflecting local drinking traditions! It is refreshing to read the final chronological chapters 'Farming and diet: AD410- 1000' and 'Medieval and later settlement, agriculture and industry: AD 1000-1900', periods often neglected. Ecology and economy are much in our minds and the biological evidence reported here certainly helps us realise how many factors produced the varied topographies throughout the easement.

This archaeological venture didn't need to happen. The pipeline did not fall into the usual planning regulations, but the National Grid was aware of the imports of such a transect to give 'an insight into the archaeology that otherwise would have remained a secret'. The title 'Timelines' is most appropriate as the geological, topographical as well as archaeological dimensions highlight the significant changing pattern of occupation of the landscape which has been impacted by factors such as climate, environmental and human influences, economic, social and political. This includes the pipeline

itself is, which is now a mark laid upon the land, another addition to the archaeology of the landscape

The volume is published to Cotswold Archaeology's usual high standards as part of its broader mission to developing knowledge of the past to a wide variety of audiences. There are also individual reports of specific sites on stages of the route on their website

<https://reports.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/>, including the Vaynor henge. This book will be useful, not only to those interested in the archaeology of the landscape of South Wales, but also, along with the Network Archaeology report, to a much wider audience. Tirley is just inside Gloucestershire, and it is a clear example that present political boundaries can be a hindrance when we study the past; in this case we must see the rolling landscape of Herefordshire as part of the hinterland of the lower Severn Valley so that we can compare it with those regions further west.

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