

Reviews

Combat archaeology: material culture and modern conflict. By J SCHOFIELD. Pp. 192. London: Duckworth. 2005. £12.99 (PB). ISBN: 978-0-71563-403-5

Combat Archaeology is part of the well-regarded Duckworth Debates in Archaeology series, which seeks to provide students and scholars with an overview of a contemporary debate in archaeology. This short volume is devoted to the theme of 20th-century conflict and its material remains. Twentieth-century conflict archaeology developed as an amateur pursuit during the 1970s following the release of military records at the Public Records Office, and archaeologists developed a professional interest from the late 1980s. The subject has developed rapidly into a broad field of study with quite ill-defined edges.

In his Preface, John Schofield states that he ‘wanted to begin to develop a social and theoretical context for the archaeological remains of recent conflict’ (p. 9). This then is not another guide for identifying surviving field remains, but rather a refreshing, theoretically explicit and socially engaged archaeological study of the material culture of modern warfare. It is firmly embedded within the contemporary archaeology movement and possesses additional value as a study of the contemporary world in its own right. The content does not claim to be definitive and should be read as a personal response to the author’s objective of highlighting issues of concern and controversy.

As a key thinker, writer and expert in the field for the last decade or so, and drawing upon his experience as a professional practitioner and academic, Schofield is ideally placed to write this book. The five chapters cover a lot of ground in impressive fashion and are deliberately organised to reflect the ‘heritage management cycle’. The author leads the reader through and between chapters using introductory and summary sections, allowing each chapter to be read either in series or individually.

The first chapter provides a general introduction to conflict archaeology and considers how the impact of technological developments set 20th-century warfare apart from its precursors. Schofield defines the main characteristics of 20th-century warfare and addresses the apparent contradiction concerning the use of archaeology as an approach to study the recent past, providing an eloquent justification for its employment.

Chapter 2 defines the material culture of modern warfare and examines how it is understood, documented and contextualised. Schofield reviews the available sources of evidence including the often-overlooked fields of filmic and artistic expression.

Chapter 3 explores how this material culture is given meaning and significance. Schofield asks key questions concerning what matters (importance), why (motivation), and to whom (constituency), explored using a variety of conceptual frameworks. A theory-laden chapter might sound off-putting, but it is informative, engaging and executed with aplomb.

Chapter 4 discusses how the resource is treated in terms of heritage protection and management. He outlines the available options and frameworks for managing these places and illustrates the process of judging importance and its consequences using case studies from Greenham Common airbase and crashed military aircraft sites. Characterisation is introduced as an approach for managing change in the historic landscape. As one would expect, principles such as *in situ* preservation, adaptive re-use, symbolic representation and preservation through record are all examined.

The final thought-provoking chapter focuses on the interpretation and (re)presentation of recent conflict sites to the general public. It recognises the challenging character of these sites

and the wide range of responses elicited in different audiences. Schofield introduces concepts such as ‘hot interpretation’ and asks whether the archaeology of warfare should be presented at all and if so how. It does not offer the comfort of any standardised solutions; instead the author advocates some general principles for interpretation and presentation, and works through a few examples to demonstrate what can be achieved.

The only unsatisfactory feature of the book is the fact that the final chapter finishes with a brief chapter-based summary and then leaps into the bibliography without providing an overall conclusion to the book. Perhaps this is a deliberate device to prompt the reader to continue thinking and draw his or her own conclusions. Personally, I think that there is much of value written in these pages and I would have liked to read the author’s conclusions.

Schofield utilises examples and case studies to good effect throughout the book, often writing from personal experience. The majority are sourced from England, so it is a shame that he has not included many examples from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. However, when focusing beyond England, he does cite relevant and important work undertaken elsewhere in Europe, South Africa, Japan, Russia, Australia and the United States.

The index is comprehensive, but not entirely accessible. While it does reflect the specific and complex character of the field, it requires a certain amount of knowledge on behalf of the reader to be used successfully. The bibliography is well referenced with secondary sources. Well over 50% of the references cited date from 2000, demonstrating the recent and developing character of the subject area. The content is well referenced and accurate. The illustrations, diagrams and tables are relatively few in number, but they aid understanding where they do appear.

As a contribution to the field of conflict archaeology, this volume provides a useful, concise and well-written summary of the subject and the issues within. It lives up to its potential and must be considered as a key reference. The author’s style is engaging and authoritative, and the content is thoughtfully organised and presented. The theoretical concepts are clearly defined and explained, allowing the reader to follow his arguments with ease.

Where *Combat archaeology* really succeeds is in Schofield’s genuinely multi-disciplinary approach to the subject and his ability to marshal a range of material into a well written and comprehensible analysis. The author does have an acknowledged tendency to dwell on Second World War and Cold War examples at the expense of earlier material. However, the book is successful in highlighting the range of methodologies that have been applied profitably to this subject, although excavation-based work is marginalised. Overall, this is a tremendous book that succeeds in providing an accessible, knowledgeable and enjoyable overview of the subject and highlights ongoing debates for a variety of audiences.

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Israeli archaeological activity in the West Bank 1967–2007. A sourcebook. By R GREENBERG and A KEINAN. Pp. 180. Jerusalem: Ostrakon. 2009. Free (suggested contribution for printed volume \$50; for CD, \$10) (PB). ISBN: 978-965-91468-0-2

The sourcebook and online resources are available via: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/wbarc/> [Accessed May 2010].

This publication is a product of the West Bank and East Jerusalem Archaeological Database Project, prepared under the auspices of the Israeli-Palestinian Archaeology Working Group. The project was concerned with cataloguing the sites surveyed between 1967 to 2007 under Israeli license in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This project emerged from recognition that the presentation and control of the past is controversial and has potential to impact any future negotiations and agreement.

This sourcebook provides the setting and context for the site catalogues and bibliographic data collected through the project. The sourcebook has six different parts. Part 1 covers the historical background detailing the political and administrative context of archaeological

survey and excavation in the West Bank since 1967. This usefully introduces the types of work undertaken and summarises the motivations of archaeological work undertaken, much of which was within a rescue context.

Part 2 focuses on the construction and format of the database; this includes summaries of the type and nature of data collated including survey and excavation. Part 2 goes on to describe the database components and GIS linkage. Interestingly, this section includes three brief case studies concerning revisiting Iron Age I, Roman Neapolis and an inventory of mosaic floors: these draw out and highlight both the limitations and potential of the database and GIS as a research tool. The authors use these to highlight the inherent bias present within some of the data, given the political context of the work (p. 28).

The bulk of this sourcebook includes lists of data and resources collated as part of the project. Part 3 is the gazetteer of excavations 1967–2007 which consists of a numbered list of 970 sites, including grid reference, site name, excavator, institution, licence numbers, periods represented, components, publications and other comments. An additional 34 sites of an unknown location are also included. The site numbers are displayed as points on the accompanying maps. Part 4 is the bibliography and Part 5 an index of excavated sites, linking site names to the map(s) and individual site numbers.

Part 6 is the database files (6,000 archaeological features, 1,600 excavations, 1,000 referenced publications). These are available online (rather than as the CD as listed); annoyingly, the sourcebook itself does not make reference to the online location, but a brief internet search provided the link. The database is searchable and can be used with the GoogleMap interface. Here the content is used well and usefully delivered digitally. The online format allows searching and interrogation of the database: this is much more usable than the printed gazetteer included within the sourcebook.

This volume is of considerable interest to anybody researching the archaeology of the Middle East. It also provides an interesting example and case study of approaches to collating and making useful archaeological data from a contested region. However, what is most important about this volume is the ‘bigger picture’ — the fact that the project was undertaken with Israeli and Palestinian cooperation. Some of these sites are listed for the first time and this is an important attempt to create a new data resource that documents and unifies the archaeology of the region, rather than one bisected by modern boundaries. As such this is an important first step, creating a platform of data available to all interested bodies. It is also relevant to developing approaches to national sites and monuments records, and archaeological information systems.

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