

*Isaac Johnson of Woodbridge. Georgian Surveyor and Artist.* By John Blatchly. 124 pp., numerous illustrations in colour and b&w. Ipswich: J.M. Blatchly in association with the Suffolk Record Office, 2014. ISBN 97809564584-4-5. Price: £15 pb.

It is perhaps appropriate that John's last book should be on antiquarian maps, prints and drawings of Suffolk, a subject that brought him great pleasure and where his knowledge was unsurpassed. It is also fitting, perhaps, that it should focus on Isaac Johnson, for Johnson was the subject of one of John's first Suffolk publications, a slim but glossy booklet entitled *Isaac Johnson of Woodbridge 1754–1835*, published by the Suffolk Record Office way back in 1979. A comparison of the two publications shows how much work John did in the last thirty years in tracking down, with great zeal, examples of the work of Johnson, who ranks as one of Suffolk's most prolific mapmakers of the Georgian period. The result is an evocative window on Suffolk (and Norfolk and occasionally elsewhere) in the decades either side of 1800. But Johnson was more than just a mapmaker, he obviously took great joy in drawing and painting, not only the churches, halls, monuments and countryside of Suffolk, but also its gardens, flowers and people, including a glimpse of Johnson's own private life in the painting of him at work in his house with his family grouped around him. Delving into the book one has the visible delights of Johnson's drawings and maps, but accompanying them one also has John's ever-erudite commentary. There are unexpected things like Johnson's illustrations of great trees, including the giant Helmingham Elm and cobbler-inhabited Worlingham Common Oak. The churches include the views of the near-ruined church at Letheringham with its wealth of Wingfield monuments – a research subject that John also took forward in exemplary fashion in our *Proceedings*. Johnson luckily had a strong antiquarian leaning and his sketches and drawings are an important source of information about sites and objects that are now lost, such as All Saints church at Dunwich and the College Gate at Sudbury. The depictions of halls include a fascinating view of Helmingham in its short-lived (thankfully) white-stuccoed phase, but also an engaging selection of unidentified buildings – a challenge from John to those who follow in his footsteps. And it is a challenge for us now that John is now no longer there to do the identifying for us – something that he was doing with great precision a week before his death. In all, this book is a delight to dip into, to discover, and to remember John by.

EDWARD MARTIN

*The Abbey and Mint of Bury St Edmunds from 1279.* (The British Numismatic Society Special Publication, No. 11). By Robin J. Eaglen. xi + 249 pp., 21 b&w plates. London: Spink, 2014. ISBN 9781907427374. Price: £45 hb.

This is the second instalment of Robin Eaglen's extensive study of the ecclesiastical mint at Bury St Edmunds and its relationship with crown, church, and town. In the first part, *The Abbey and Mint of Bury St Edmunds to 1279* (2006), for which he was awarded the 2008 North Book Prize by the British Numismatic Society, Eaglen examined the foundation of the mint in the mid 11th century through to the end of the Long Cross coinage in 1279. The current volume focuses on the new sterling coinage introduced by Edward I in 1279 and issued for half a century at Bury prior to the demise of the mint in c. 1329 during the reign of Edward III. From the outset (p. x) Eaglen is clear that the volume of surviving Bury mint sterling coins makes a comprehensive corpus of all known examples impractical. Rather, he presents a detailed, die-linked study of almost 2500 examples drawn from his own personal collection; a range of private collections; hoard data; and the collections of several major

public institutions. The result is a thorough and representative catalogue of some 499 die combinations intertwined with comprehensive historical narrative that presents the latter stages of the Bury mint in its social and ecclesiastical setting.

The volume can be broadly divided into two halves. In the first half, Chapter 1 provides an overview of the origins and early years of the mint, as presented in the first volume, followed by an exploration of the social context and historical development of the mint, as well as analysis of the successive dies and die combinations, in use during the reigns of Edward I (Chapter 2) and Edwards II and III (Chapter 3) respectively. Finally, Chapter 4 examines the demise of the mint through to the dissolution of the abbey in 1539, with brief comment on the surviving remains of the abbey precinct through to the present day. The second half of the volume presents the core numismatic dataset and largely comprises Eaglen's die-linked catalogue. Beginning with the slightly unusual Robert of Hadleigh reverse dies, and continuing with those naming the Bury mint, each combination is presented chronologically based on J.J. North's classification of Edwardian sterling issues. The catalogue is clearly organised, cross-referenced to examples present in Eaglen's study group, and aided by individual photographs of each die link in 21 plates at the end of the volume. The three appendices at the end of the volume offer very useful visual overviews of English sterling issues (Appendix 1), as well as summaries of the corpus (Appendix 2) and the known die combinations (Appendix 3).

For the non-specialist audience the great benefit of Eaglen's study lies in its integration of numismatic with historical and ecclesiastical datasets. This is more than simply a dry numismatic die study, and for those interested in medieval Bury instead makes accessible a range of historical sources presented in a clear and very readable format. Equally, it affords an excellent introduction to the development and identification of Bury's coinage against the backdrop of broader national monetary change, while for more serious numismatic study of the Bury mint the die-linked catalogue and associated analysis should be the first point of reference.

ANDREW BROWN

*A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds 1257–1301: Simon of Luton and John of Northwold.* By Antonia Gransden. xxiv + 349 pp., figures, maps, bibliography, index. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015. ISBN 9781783270262. Price: £60 hb.

The tradition of books and learning in Bury St Edmunds stretches back more than seven hundred years. At the end of the thirteenth century the abbey was the centre of historical writing in eastern England, and by the close of the Middle Ages prided itself on one of the country's largest libraries, owning some 2100 books. Over the past fifty years Antonia Gransden has done more than any other scholar to breath fresh life into that tradition and to explore the history of one of our greatest Benedictine houses. This volume is her latest offering.

Two of the books in that library, the *Bury Chronicle* and the *Gesta Sacristarum*, are among her principal sources. They record life under abbots Simon (1257–79) and John (1279–1301), and John's able sacrist William of Hoo. It was a time of financial stringency with many contemporary echoes. William was 'excessively rigid and austere' in his economy measures. He needed to be. The abbey was burdened by taxation and other heavy expenditure and, at times, was grateful for the low cost of borrowing. Both Simon and John had to travel to Rome to seek confirmation of their appointments from the Pope at a combined cost of nearly £2500 – an enormous sum in those days. Simon fought expensive legal battles with the Greyfriars to force them out of town, and with the earl of Gloucester to retain the manor of Mildenhall. The parliament of 1265 extracted 800 marks, more than £500, as a penalty for his alleged