

Kathryn Davies, *Artisan Art: Vernacular wall paintings in the Welsh Marches 1550-1650*, Logaston Press, 2008 (paperback), available from Pengwern Books, 23 Princess Street, Shrewsbury SY1 1LW (£17.50, plus postage).

This publication provides a spectacular record and interpretation of surviving wall painting from the Welsh Marches, originating from a transitional period of vernacular rebuilding between the end of the medieval open-plan times to the more enclosed interiors associated with the renaissance and Georgian periods. The author not only emphasizes the importance of redecoration through these transitional times but stresses that such wall paintings were far from the preserve of the rich and were relatively common. A broader context is also conveyed by examples from Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Suffolk and Surrey.

Subsequent chapters focus on practical and technical aspects of wall painting preparation in terms of the availability of indigenous pigments ('Bristol oker' from the Golden Valley for example), the application of pigments using binding agents, often in conjunction with a substrate (plaster or limewash) over canvas or wood panelling, cost factors and design sources. The author suggests that there is some evidence of a vernacular palette of pigments which may have been inhibited by 17th century acts of parliament intended to control the conflicting activities of painter/stainers and plasterers. In the early 17th century plasterers were only to use six specified pigments 'mingled with size only'. The publication concludes with a gazetteer of 230 wall paintings.

John Boram