

IN MEMORIAM

Charles Daniels (1932-1996)

The sudden and premature death of Charles Daniels, on 1 September 1996, marks the loss of a scholar in a tradition of Roman Wall studies which reached back via John Gillam, Ian Richmond, Eric Birley and F. G. Simpson to the early years of this century.

Charles Manser Daniels was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1932 and remained a Tynesider through and through. Educated at the Royal Grammar School in Newcastle, during the war years he was evacuated to Penrith with his school. After taking a first degree in history at King's College, Newcastle, he was appointed Sir James Knott Research Student in 1955, Sir James Knott Research Fellow in 1959 and completed an MA in Mithraic Studies under Ian Richmond in 1961. In 1961 he was made Assistant Keeper of Antiquities in the Museum of Antiquities and in 1972 lecturer in the Department of Archaeology. He was appointed Senior Lecturer in 1980 and retired in March 1996.

One of Charles' earliest excavations was in 1955 at Bowness-on-Solway where he investigated the extent of survival of Roman remains just outside the west gate of the fort. In the event, the site proved to have more to say about the medieval fortified site which overlay the Roman defences (*CW2*, lx, 13-19). Nonetheless, the work awakened in Charles a concern for the piecemeal loss of the interiors of Wall forts by housing infill in overlying villages. Bowness was one of the worst examples, and it was a problem that has not been solved. In 1958 Charles became a member of this Society but never held office. The only other fieldwork he conducted in Cumbria was small scale work at Tarraby Lane, Stanwix in 1975 which was subsumed by a more extensive project conducted by George Smith (*Britannia*, viii).

Cumbria, of course, was only part of the main field of Charles' work which was the study of Hadrian's Wall as a whole and a series of major excavations which formed the basis for many of the developments in Wall studies during the 1970s and 1980s. After participating in the Corbridge training excavations of the 1950s, Charles excavated the bath-house at Red House, Corbridge from 1955-57 (published *AA4*, xxxvii). This project initiated a lifetime interest in Roman bath-houses but, even more significantly, culminated in the discovery and excavation in 1974 of a predecessor to the main Corbridge site under the line of the A69, Corbridge by-pass. In 1964, Charles was directing the training excavation at the main site at Corbridge when the famous chest of armour was found. Charles published a preliminary study of the contents of the chest (*AA4*, xlvi) which, in the hands of Russell Robinson, revolutionised our understanding of how *lorica segmentata* functioned.

The other two sites which were the focus of attention were Housesteads, where a series of University training excavations, from 1974 to 1984, directed in conjunction with John Gillam and latterly, Jim Crow, examined the north-east corner of the fort, and Wallsend, from 1975 onwards, where the expectation of road-widening threatened destruction of much of the fort. Wallsend gave the first realistic possibility of establishing the primary layout of a Wall fort and thereby relating the provision of space to a known unit type. Although the threat of road-widening ultimately receded the work continued (in part through the good offices of Dorothy Charlesworth) and the aim was largely achieved.

An unexpected by-product of the work at Wallsend was the discovery of a series of changes in the internal fort buildings, most notably an extensive rebuilding of most of the interior in the late third or early fourth century. Recognition of this coincided with work on Barrack XIII at Housesteads which mirrored that done by John Wilkes on Barrack XIV in 1961. At

Housesteads the new style buildings were close-set units christened “chalets”. At Wallsend the new building units were more diverse but the new excavations exposed the fact that most northern forts changed dramatically in the fourth century. In a paper presented to the 1979 Limes Congress Charles drew attention to these changes, bringing in parallels from older excavations at Chesters, Great Chesters, High Rochester and Birdoswald, where the evidence existed on early excavators’ plans which had hitherto not been fully understood.

It was, however, the 13th edition of the Collingwood Bruce *Handbook to the Roman Wall* that was probably Charles’ greatest achievement. The 12th edition of 1965 had been edited by Ian Richmond and by 1978 was out of date in many respects. As a mark of the progress in the intervening years the 13th edition expanded from 248 to 355 pages. Charles’ death cut short work on a much-needed new edition required to record the many discoveries at Wallsend, Housesteads, Vindolanda, and South Shields, amongst others, whose importance had not been fully assessed in 1978. *The Handbook to the 1989 Pilgrimage*, also edited by Charles, goes only part way to mitigating the loss.

Charles was at the centre of all aspects of work on Hadrian’s Wall. Our members will remember him at the decennial Pilgrimages which he helped to organise and guide. He was a central figure in the Northern Frontier seminars and a keen supporter of the Limes Congresses. He was also involved in the various panels which over the years have advised English Heritage (and its predecessors) on the management of Hadrian’s Wall. Following in the tradition of Ian Richmond, he and John Gillam made the Archaeology Department at Newcastle University a centre of undergraduate teaching on the Roman Frontiers. On a personal level visiting scholars always received warm hospitality from Charles and Miriam, his wife. Finally, Charles made a point of visiting excavations and keeping up to date with developments on the ground. It was such attention to detail that kept his knowledge of Wall matters encyclopedic: witness the detailed review of Richard Bellhouse’s book on the Cumberland Coast in *Britannia*, xxi.

While Wall studies were at the centre of Charles’ career, his academic interests covered a wide area. A visit to the British School in Rome in 1958, not only introduced him to Miriam, his future wife, but led to work at the early medieval site of Santa Cornelia and also to Africa. A series of expeditions to the Fezzan in Libya explored the remains of the Garamantes, a people contemporary with the Romans, in their homeland of the Wadi el-Agial. This extended to a wide-ranging knowledge of the African provinces and involvement with the Society for Libyan Studies, including its Chairmanship from 1978 to 1983. Charles also excavated widely in Britain including work at Wroxeter, Caersws, and on the Gask ridge.

Finally, for us in Cumbria, we should note Charles’ involvement as a Trustee of the Senhouse Museum in Maryport. Coming in at the foundation of the Trust, Charles helped to create the Museum and from 1991 to 1993 he was Chairman of the Trustees. Unfortunately this period coincided with periods of ill-health which limited his impact. It is appropriate now to acknowledge his personal generosity to the Trust on several occasions when money was tight – a fact that was not always known even to fellow Trustees.

I am grateful to David Breeze and Miriam Daniels for help in the preparation of this obituary.

Ian Caruana