

Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites

Rosemary Cramp

with contributions by

S Anderson, M M Archibald, I K Bailiff, H Baker, C E Batey, J Bayley, A Bečević
G and F Bettess, P Bidwell, D Birkett, R Brickstock, R H Brill, B Burke, E Cambridge,
J Cherry, P Clogg, B J Cook, A Croom, J Cronyn, L Daines, S Daniels, B Dickinson,
A Donaldson, V I Evison, M Firby, I C Freestone, I H Goodall, C P Graves, J Henderson,
M J Hughes, J P Huntley, A R Hutchinson, A Jenner, A K G Jones, J Jones, P C Lowther,
A Mac Mahon, S A Mills, B Noddle, T P O'Connor, G Papageorgakis, E Pirie, A J Price,
M Redknapp, I Riddler, S Ross, D Schofield, S M Stallibrass, M S Tite, M Trueman,
A Vince, C Wells, I Wessels, J West, H B Willmott and R Young.

edited by Pamela Lowther

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Summary

Appendix C lists the contexts assigned to periods before the later post-medieval and forms an integral part of the two-volume publication on the Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic sites.

Volume 1 describes the twin monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Northumbria, which achieved European importance in the period between its foundation in the late 7th century and destruction in the mid 9th, partly because of the pioneering achievements of its founder, Benedict Biscop, in creating an important centre of culture and learning, but mainly because of the fame of the most renowned inmate, the theologian and historian, Bede. The 11th-century refoundation, and survival of both sites as religious centres to the present day, is largely due to the continuing interest in his work. Despite this interest, however, nothing was known of the physical context of this work – save for the surviving parts of the early churches – until the excavations described in Volume 1 took place. Both sites produced evidence for large-scale buildings with lead roofing, *opus signinum* floors and painted and sculptured wall decoration, as well as the greatest quantity of 7th- to 8th-century coloured window glass from any site of comparable date in Europe. Other finds include glass vessels and *millefiori* settings, as well as evidence, in the form of waste rods, crucibles, and residues, for glass working in the 9th century. There are also important sculptures, significant numbers of stone vessels, including a mortarium and lamps, as well as early glazed pottery, from this period.

The excavated evidence south of the standing churches for the main domestic buildings of the monasteries provides an important insight into the evolution of monastic plans in the Christian West between the late 7th and mid-9th centuries – a period before the Carolingian Revival, when there is little evidence for stone buildings except for churches. The excavations have also provided some evidence for the economic base of such sites and have demonstrated their international contacts, particularly in the range of exotic pottery from the riverside buildings at

Introduction

Jarrow.

The excavation of the successor monasteries – some of the ruined buildings of which still survive at Jarrow – has made it possible to consider the local economies of the sites through a period of 1100 years. Changing uses of maritime and regional resources can be demonstrated from the finds, and the cemeteries of the two sites have provided useful long-term demographic evidence from the Early Christian period to the 19th century. It is now possible to see the churches on both sites within the context of first a thriving Anglo-Saxon monastery, then semi-derelict areas, followed by the earliest Norman religious houses in the region, and after that, until the Dissolution, within the context of the dependencies of Durham Priory.

Volume 2 is concerned with the description and analysis of the material remains associated with the Anglo-Saxon and medieval occupations. The post-medieval artefacts are not reported on, but all material from the excavations was retained and all artefacts have been listed and some have been fully catalogued and drawn. Only a very small amount of very modern material from superficial deposits was discarded on site, but this too was listed in the site finds catalogues. Catalogues and reports on all the finds exist in the two site archives.