

## REVIEWS

*Our Vanishing Heritage: Forestry and Archaeology*, ed. Edwina Proudfoot. Council for Scottish Archaeology, Occasional Papers no. 2 (1989), 36 pp., 12 figs., card cover. No price given.

This slender volume contains the papers delivered at the indoor proceedings of a conference held at Inverness in 1987, together with a Foreword by Professor Smout and a Preface by the Editor. A series of footnotes and post-scripts indicate the very welcome changes which took place between the time of the conference and the publication of the proceedings. That some 250 people attended the symposium and, after discussion, produced a firmly worded resolution is a measure of the deep concern felt over the likely impact of increasing afforestation on archaeological remains and the heritage generally in Scotland.

Amongst some of the cogent points raised by Roger Mercer was that of what may be the appropriate nature and extent of the archaeological samples that can or should be preserved in view of the extensive "archaeological landscapes" now known to survive. For those members of our Society who may not be so familiar with this problem in the Scottish uplands a glance at the latest RCAMS volume on *North East Perth* (HMSO 1990), a recent accession to our library, will provide a graphic illustration. In our own neck of the woods this very problem first arose some twenty-five years ago in attempts to preserve some early settlements with extensive field clearance, rather than just "unitary" monuments, in circumstances where scheduling could not then operate, despite a sympathetic Inspectorate, and the Forestry Commission had bought extensive areas for planting in ignorance of any remains other than scheduled "unitary" monuments. It was then a matter of give and take and gentlemen's agreements at short notice. We should perhaps remember that there are still some areas free from trees which have continued to

exist only on this basis.

John Dunbar, in his contribution, was primarily concerned with the role of the Royal Commission in Scotland and how it attempts to respond to the problem of survey and record of monuments. In addition he gives a useful if necessarily short account of the measure of post-war planting, including the trend towards private forestry, and, albeit in a single sentence, draws attention to the archaeological implication of the possibility of extension of afforestation onto better quality land—a movement which is already apparent and will need to be monitored in our own area.

In like manner the role of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Directorate of SDD was the subject of Tom Band (then the Director) and was subsequently updated by David Breeze because of the advances made between 1987 and 1989. For those who may be puzzled as to the respective roles of RCHMS and HBM, and are sometimes inclined to not particularly well informed criticism, there is much in the accounts of both roles that should enlighten.

*Nature Conservation and Forestry*, the subject of the paper by Jim McCarthy of the Nature Conservancy Council, most appropriately broadened the scope of interest beyond the archaeological and indicates the part which the forestry industry can play in nature conservation during the cycle of planting and subsequent management. In reading this contribution the reviewer was reminded of the broadly based committee which was formed locally at Kings College in c. 1945 to meet the circumstances of an anticipated increase in post-war afforestation in parts of Northumberland by survey, record and monitoring. It had this great advantage of bringing together forestry representatives with those from geology, agriculture, zoology, botany and archaeology. Unfortunately such a joint venture seems to have lasted for only a few years—though it was clearly instrumental in saving some of our

local "unitary" archaeological sites from overplanting.

The *Forestry Commission View* and *The View from Private Forestry* were delivered by Alastair Rowan and Richard Ogilvie respectively. In brief, all now appears to be understanding and co-operation. This is most heartening, but there may be some who are long in the tooth, as is the reviewer, who will have to forget past incidents where sweet reasonableness did not seem to be present in the equipment of the Forestry Commission or the private companies.

The nearest approach to the sharp end of the problem probably lies in the contribution made by Ian Shepherd, Regional Archaeologist for Grampian, on *Archaeology, Forestry and Planning*. But again this has had to be updated by a postscript giving some changes for the better in the procedures under the new Woodland Grant Scheme.

All told this is now a useful historical document which has played some part, albeit with other important agencies, in achieving a little more in the way of resources which will allow a greater flexibility in the archaeological response to successive changes in land use. No one can deny that it has been a long haul to reach this stage; nor can it be assumed that all the problems are solved simply by increased resources.

GEORGE JOBEY

*Portae cum Turribus: Studies of Roman Fort Gates*. Edited by Paul Bidwell, Roger Miket and Bill Ford. British Archaeological Report British Series 206 (1988). 231 pages, 91 figs.

This volume consists of seven articles on the subject of Roman fort gates and defences, revisions (and in some cases expansions) of papers given originally at a seminar held at South Shields in 1985. The reason which lay behind the seminar was the proposal by Tyne and Wear County Council Museums Service to reconstruct, full-scale, on site, the south-west gate of the fort at South Shields. The proposal was controversial—it was very much at odds

with the normal practice in the presentation of British monuments—and went to public enquiry. Permission for the reconstruction was granted subject to certain conditions, including full consultation regarding the detailed proposals.

Two of the papers concern timber defences. Manning and Scott write on timber gates and iron gate-fittings in general. One issue touched on, which is of importance in the context of the later stone gates, is the nature of the gate towers, in particular the fact that many did not have a ground floor as such. The timbers were sunk within the thickness of the rampart. It is clearly the upper levels, the elevated viewing platform, which is of importance. Once such towers are translated into stone, a ground floor room is created perforce. It existed in order to support the superstructure. Once in existence a function will be found for it, but that function need not be related to the primary purpose of the gate structure. The point is of relevance to Bennett's discussion (pp. 132–4) of the ground-floor flanking rooms in stone gateways. Hobley discusses the appearance of turf and timber defences in the light of experience of the rebuild at the Lunt, Baginton. It is of note that all the reconstruction drawings of timber gateways in Hobley's paper show outward-opening gates. What is his evidence? In the case of stone gateways where there is more evidence on the point, the gates can be shown to open inwards, and indeed the threshold on the well-preserved Carlisle timber fort gate suggests that here too the gates opened inwards. The issue is of some relevance to the point, raised elsewhere, that "Roman gateways are usually regarded as having a primarily defensive function". An inward-opening gate is much less defensive than the outward-opening type. Its pivots may be better protected, but the gates themselves are much easier to force open by an inrush of attackers.

The other five papers deal with stone defences: Welsby discusses the well-preserved gateways at Bu Njem and Gheriat in Tripolitania (modern Libya), two of the few Roman military sites with gateways which still stand intact to the level of the arches and above;

Walker discusses the reconstructed gateway and defences at Castlefield, Manchester (the only other site in Britain where a full-sized stone gate has been rebuilt). Bennett, in a discussion of principal fort gates on Hadrian's Wall, touches on an interesting range of issues including those of quarrying and stoneworking, gate widths and Roman metrication. Might the roughness of the stonework discussed by Bennett, perhaps suggest plastering of the walls as attested at (and incorporated in the reconstruction of) the Saalburg fort in Upper Germany—the best known and most completely reconstructed fort in the Roman Empire. It is, incidentally, a pity that there is no contribution by a German archaeologist on the reconstructed military works in the Germanies and Raetia, where there is a long and active tradition of archaeological reconstruction. Bennett's attribution to Hadrian of the implementation of "a coherent all-embracing policy of permanent stone structures throughout the Empire to replace the existing tradition of earth and timber forts" is something of an exaggeration. The transition is, in reality, much more gradual. Earth and timber forts continued to exist well into the second half of the second century, while stone appears on Rhine and Danube in the Flavian and Trajanic periods. In the African and eastern provinces, forts had always been built of stone there being little suitable structural timber readily available. Crow discusses the gateways of milecastle 39 (Castle Nick), recently re-excavated and re-consolidated, while the final paper by Bidwell, Miket and Ford, features South Shields itself, the published version having been updated and revised in the light of the actual building work, completed by the time this volume of essays went to press.

All the controversial issues relative to the South Shields gateway reconstruction are aired by Bidwell *et al* who give a reasoned review of the evidence taken into account: the height of the fort wall, the relative widths of merlons and embrasures in its crenellations, the height of the towers, the nature of the roofs over the towers and the platform between, the use of string courses and other architectural detail

such as the design of the windows, the nature of the access to the rampart walk and the upper levels of the gatetowers, and the timber elements incorporated in the gate structure. A final section provides a commentary on the gate as reconstructed.

Together these essays provide a splendid compendium of information on fort walls and gateways, their ground plans, for which there is good archaeological evidence, and the nature of their superstructures, for which the evidence is much more patchy and which provide the more controversial elements in any proposed restoration. The assembled information on the detail of the upper levels includes, in addition to the standing evidence of the two well-preserved Severan sites in Libya, the Praetorian camp and later city walls in Rome, a fallen fort wall at Wörth in Upper Germany and an assortment of chamfered stones and merlon caps of different shapes and sizes, as well as the remarkably well-preserved timber gate-leaf from Vindolanda. Between them the authors assemble an interesting collection of pictorial material—mosaics, sculptures and metal artefacts—depicting gates and wall-tops, material on which varying degrees of trust are placed.

As Bidwell *et al* point out in their concluding paper, differences of opinion, interpretation and emphasis are manifest in the various contributions to the seminar. The gateway that eventually arose at South Shields embodies just one among several possible interpretations of the evidence. To read this volume is to be well prepared to view a monument that—whether or not one agrees with its having been reconstructed at all—is a splendid starting point for discussion of many of the crucial issues relating to Roman fort defences.

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A. J. Mainman, *Anglo-Scandinavian Pottery from Coppergate, The Archaeology of York: The Pottery 16/5*. Council for British Archaeology, London 1990. Pp. 375, figs. 141, pls. XXI. ISBN 0906780 89 6.

This report is another in the series of detailed presentations of important archaeological evidence recovered from the Coppergate site in York. It demonstrates once again, the disciplined and scholarly work which lies behind the imaginative reconstructions of life in Viking York derived from the archaeological evidence. At the same time, the pottery sequence itself and the way in which it has been analysed and presented make an important contribution to the study of ceramics and its application to the interpretation of archaeological sites.

The pottery assemblage of over 55,000 sherds, from well stratified Anglo-Scandinavian deposits dating to the period c. A.D. 850–1066, provided the first real opportunity to make a systematic study of the local pottery traditions and their development in this crucial early period. Furthermore it contributed valuable evidence for the interpretation of the development of the four urban tenements that make up the site. The author was clearly conscious of these two important aspects of the study in presenting her report and especially of the fact that it would inevitably become an important reference for ceramic researchers and excavators, not only in York and its region, but in the general archaeological study of the period.

The report is first set in context by a brief introduction to the archaeology of the site by the excavation director, R. A. Hall. A. J. Mainman then gives a brief summary of previous research, based mainly on small poorly stratified groups of pottery from earlier excavations. This is followed by discussion of methodological problems in quantifying and interpreting pottery assemblages from excavations as well as the wider archaeological problem of residuality.

Having reminded us of the limitations of her field of study, in the next section she presents

*The Pottery*, divided into subsections for each fabric type. Each of these sections includes concise descriptions of specific pottery wares, discussion of their distribution and chronology and references to previous relevant research. Each fabric section is also illustrated by line drawings, tables and distribution plots or maps. The next section, *Interpretation of the Pottery*, discusses the pottery in relation to the site and therefore gives an account of the composition of the pottery assemblages in each period and in relation to each tenement. This section is also illustrated by plans and tables, and particularly by seriographs which provide a quick graphic illustration of the incidence of the various fabric types by period and location. The main part of the book concludes with a general discussion and conclusion which summarizes the main findings and outstanding research questions.

A full catalogue of the pottery is included at the end of the volume (not relegated to microfiche as is so often the case). Last but not least, there are six pages of black and white and two of colour plates of the pottery. These are of high quality and a valuable supplement to the descriptive fabric sections. Perhaps the most striking photograph, of a complete Torksey ware pitcher, features in the cover design.

This is a very practical work of reference, destined to be a well-thumbed friend to ceramics researchers for some years to come, with a lot to offer to all practising archaeologists. The fabric section can be used on its own as an aid to the identification and dating of pottery. The discussions of methodology and the interpretation of the pottery in relation to the site, provide a useful lesson in the strengths and weaknesses of using ceramic evidence for the purpose of archaeological interpretation and dating. Finally, the methods of presentation used are of interest to anyone involved in the publication of archaeological data. A. J. Mainman has published a large body of hard data in a form that is accessible and helpful to the reader, whatever his or her level or area of interest.

MARGARET CHARD

Charles Parish, *The History of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne*, vol. II, 1896–1989; with contributions by J. A. V. Chapple, S. T. L. Harbottle, Peter C. G. Isaac and John Philipson. Newcastle upon Tyne: The Literary and Philosophical Society, 1990. ISBN 0 9514922 0 9. Pp. [viii+] 224, 7 plates. £15.

This volume is meant as a sequel and supplement to Robert Spence Watson's *History of the Society 1793–1896* (1897) and opens with a colour plate of the Society's portrait of him. The dates in the new title are therefore somewhat misleading, for Mr. Parish tries to compensate for the comparatively limited notice given to the Society's library by Spence Watson and surveys its whole history and significance, while all the additional contributions by other hands also deal with the earlier period. Mr. Parish is the author or compiler of rather more than half the volume, with two chapters on the Society and its Library, one on its building and Bolbec Hall, one on University Extension Courses and another on Miscellaneous Lectures, in each case with list of lecturers and subjects, and a biographical essay on Captain George Dixon, circumnavigator and Honorary Member of the Society (d. 1794). This chapter is the second half of a lecture to the Society, and so were the others, by Professor Chapple on Elizabeth Gaskell and the Turner family, Professor Isaac on William Bulmer (1757–1830), fine printer and Honorary Member, and Mr. Harbottle on W. K. Loftus, an archaeologist from Newcastle (1820–57). Appendix One is Mr. Philipson's paper from *Archaeologia Aeliana* (5th series, vol. 9, 1981) on the Sebroke Crozier and the Nineteenth-Century Newcastle Museum, and Appendix Two lists the officers of the Society from 1897 to 1989.

Mr. Parish was well-qualified by nearly a quarter of a century as the Society's Librarian, after his previous experience at the Birmingham Library of which he published the *History* (1966), to explain how, unlike the latter and others of eighteenth-century foundation, the Lit & Phil's was not a proprietary library (set up for that purpose, with shareholders), but

one of the several benefits of an annual subscription to an institution with much wider objects. He describes the growth of the collection and its make-up, from successive catalogues and reports, showing how serious and comprehensive the acquisitions policy was, the exclusion of controversial theology, novels and practical works on law and medicine being abandoned only in 1891. The creation of a card catalogue and reclassification by the Dewey decimal system from 1887 were very up-to-date decisions for a private body, and the rapidity with which the damage of the fire after the centenary celebration in 1893 was repaired is remarkable. Mr. Parish rightly praises the printed catalogue of 1903, as still a valuable reference tool outside the library, particularly because of the wealth of material relating to Northumberland and Durham. He tells how the music collections have been built up subsequently in association with the extension courses and the staff of Armstrong College, King's College and Newcastle University. He shows how the comparative importance of the library in the life of the Society grew as the popularity of public lectures declined, in the period after the first World War. It is amazing now to hear that in 1901 the average attendance at the miscellaneous lectures was 527, reaching a peak of 600 in each of the three years after the first war, and still in 1925 was 352, but by 1967 the 1860 lecture-theatre could be replaced with a room "capable of taking a hundred people". This decline must reflect not only competition from the entertainment offered by cinema, radio and television but also a dulling of the intellectual curiosity by which the Society had been created and grown. The reduction in membership from the peaks of 5,000 in 1919 and 3690 in 1947 (significantly after each of the wars) to 1700 in 1959 must however also have been influenced by the great improvements of the public library service.

Mr. Parish describes the decades of resulting financial difficulties, aggravated by those of the ownership of the adjacent Bolbec Hall and of necessary alterations to the Society's own building, and the successive steps taken to meet them, culminating in the successful

appeal of 1984. The sale in 1959 of the Assyrian reliefs presented by Loftus in 1855 from his excavations was not disastrous, in the opinion of the reviewer, for they did not fit into the present strengths of the Society and their place of display was awkward, but it is a pity they did not go to a local institution. The sale of some scientific books of historical interest in 1951 is more to be regretted, as Mr. Parish says, and the Sotheby's auction of eighty books of natural history in 1972. He does not mention the happier subsequent solution by sale of some to Newcastle University Library. Despite these losses there have been a number of notable gifts and bequests since and substantial grants obtained for conservation of the books as well as of their housing, in recognition of their regional and national importance.

The chapters by other contributors are accounts of a variety of personalities connected with the Society in its first sixty years or so, illustrative of the range of its interests then, and of the relationships between the Lit & Phil, the Natural History Society and the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle as they assembled and later sorted out objects of interest to their different specializations.

Members of the Lit & Phil have good reason to dwell with pride on their leading share in the self-education of the area, and on their resilience in overcoming physical and financial problems and adapting to changed circumstances. This book, well designed (by Henry Davy) and printed locally, is very good value for non-members too.

A. I. DOYLE