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BOOK REVIEWS, 2001

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D. J. Taylor, *The Forts on Hadrian's Wall: a comparative analysis of the form and construction of some buildings* (BAR British Series 305, 2000), pp. 246, 61 line drawings, 71 pls. ISBN 1 84171 076 8. Price £35.00.

Elizabeth A. M. Shirley, *The Construction of the Roman Legionary Fortress at Inchtuthil* (BAR British Series 298, 2000), 234 pp, 71 line drawings, 139 tables. ISBN 1 84171 058 X. Price £32.00.

This reviewer has frequently argued for a greater awareness by archaeologists of the technicalities of other trades when dealing with excavated buildings. The satisfaction of this need has, in part, been frustrated by the lack of suitable first-hand material which does not rely on second or third generation interpretation of the techniques or applications. Here are two substantial volumes which deal with different aspects of Roman buildings, by authors who are familiar with the building process on a practical, day-to-day basis.

Dr. Taylor comes to archaeology from the background of an architectural practice, where a proper understanding of building construction is necessary for survival, and this experience is very obvious in his survey of Roman fort buildings. He opens with a review of the history of Wall studies, excavation, and publication, concluding that, even with the benefit of historical hindsight, there have been serious shortcomings particularly in the area of excavation reports. The Introduction ends with an overview of the Wall, its garrison, and the forts and their buildings; perhaps oddly, Carrawburgh is seen as a primary fort. T. introduces a note of caution as to the date of the buildings

examined in the body of the volume, pointing out that early excavators were not necessarily precise in their methods. He eschews the use of the centimetre as a unit of measurement, very properly holding to the S.I. units of the metre and the millimetre to avoid the possibility of confusion.

Part 2 summarises the techniques of building, and argues that, even though building work might have been restricted to the frost-free season, there is no reason why excavation, quarrying, and transport might not have taken place over a longer period. It is however difficult to agree with T.'s view that the stones of the Wall or fort curtain were dressed on-site to any serious extent; the volume of chippings would have been much greater than the present writer is aware of at any site. Equally, the suggestion that voussoirs were worked to a standard profile and altered to suit smaller openings seems highly unlikely. The standard of masonry work on the Wall is generally so bad that a variation in the radius of voussoirs is not at all surprising. T. highlights a common problem with mortar samples: building practice is to mix by volume, whereas analysis is generally by weight.

The techniques of, and design criteria relating to, carpentry and joinery (and he points out the difference between the two), roofs and roof coverings are also examined in some detail. Just as important, the sourcing of materials is also considered, and there is a particularly clear description of the different methods of timber conversion. T. has important observations on the life expectancy of various building materials and of the buildings themselves. The various elements mentioned and the extant features referred to are well illustrated by either line drawings or very clear plates.

Part 3 looks at four types of buildings for which evidence survives in the Wall forts:

principia, granaries, gates, and barracks. This is considered under four heads, Design and Form, Dimensional Analysis (which includes the forts themselves), Constructional Sequence, and Constructional Techniques as related to the form of the selected buildings. It is this part of the volume which perhaps more than any other gives the reader the full benefit of T.'s practical experience of building design and construction; there is much thoughtful and useful analysis of many elements of the building types and of individual buildings. This is backed up by two very useful appendices summarising dimensions for all the buildings here considered, in both primary and secondary forts.

Part 4 offers reconstructions of the appearance of the four types of building. This is a brief textual overview, with numerous line drawings to illustrate both details and whole buildings. Here, T. is very sensibly offering reconstructions of those parts susceptible of this, and avoiding the trap of reconstructing everything for the sake of it.

Two of the Appendices have been mentioned, where dimensions of buildings are listed by fort. Appendix 3 tabulates dimensions by building type in even greater detail; again a very useful reference tool for other researchers. Appendix 4 is a catalogue of decorated and moulded stonework from contexts which are probably Hadrianic.

The Summary notes that archaeologists do not understand building techniques, and do not even know the correct names for the various elements of a building. But T. falls into a similar trap, for his use of terms relating to the working of stone is at times either loose or simply wrong: for 'pitched face' read 'chiselled face' (these are at opposite ends of the skill and time spectrum), except on p. 65 where a typographical error should read 'picked'. This emphasises the value of involving specialists from all relevant fields in excavation and post-excavation analysis. The Glossary is uneven in its scope – *opus quadratum* is listed, *opus reticulatum* is not – and the volume as a whole suffers from a fault common in BAR publications in that there is no index. It is not necessary

to italicise Vallum when written with a capital letter.

But, masonry terms apart, these are minor faults. This is a book which should be on the shelf of every archaeologist who has to deal with buildings.

Dr Shirley's book on Inchtuthil has as its aim the assessment of quantities and supply of materials, and the labour involved, for the building and subsequent demolition of the legionary fortress at Inchtuthil. Like T., S. looks at the Roman building process from a position in the building industry, in this case that of a Chartered Building Surveyor.

The content is in places complementary to, and in others overlaps with, the work of T. Shirley perhaps goes into greater detail over the constructional techniques, taking especial pleasure in the consideration of the timber joints. She offers suggestions as to the original form of the buildings as 'a plausible way of constructing' rather than 'reconstruction', a practical and pragmatic approach. These suggested forms are put forward with one aim in mind: that of assessing the quantity of materials and labour input needed for every type of building in the fortress.

In her Introduction S. looks at, among other topics, the interpretation of buildings, seeing them as the remnant of a long process of design, supply, construction, and organisation, and reviews similar work in the field. Chapter 2 discusses in some detail the methodology of the research, recognising the problems inherent in divining quantities on the basis of a ground plan. Chapter 3 looks at construction methods and materials, with almost half devoted to roofs and roof coverings. It may be noted here that T. has argued against S.'s suggested minimum pitch of 20° for tiled roofs in northern Britain (*Britannia* 30 (1999) 297–298). Wall construction, window and lighting, ventilation, and internal temperatures are also considered.

Discussion of the quantities of materials begins in chapter 4, with details of Tribune's House I, and very usefully shows which design options have a significant effect on quantities. It is here that the eye of the innumerate reader

may begin to glaze over, with 18 tables in eleven pages, but one would not have it any other way. The evidence is presented in full, allowing the reader to extract the maximum detail and to judge the results. To take one example, the number of nails required for one of the three different options of roof shapes offered, covered with once-nailed shingles, is 17,032; for nailing of floor boards, 10,679. The summary of quantities for roofs gives three roof shapes each at a choice of two pitches, and for both shingles and tiles. The detail presented is exhaustive but not exhausting.

The following chapter goes into similar detail for all the fortress buildings, the defences, the drains, the ovens, the roads, and the buildings in the Officers' Temporary Camp. Naturally enough, given the nature of the buildings, the greatest emphasis is given to timber, but it is in this chapter that stone makes its first tentative appearance.

Chapter 6 looks at working methods and rates of working, the labour requirements in terms of hours of work, numbers, levels of skill, gender (initially surprising but, on reflection, an obvious point), and slave or free status, and covering preparation, transport, building, and demolition. Rates are largely based on pre-mechanisation estimating books; this is generally a successful method, but stonework, as S. readily admits, is unreliable. S. sees this as due to lack of information on the working methods and the nature of the construction; it is also because the work of building a Roman defensive wall with stones comparatively deep for the face sizes, is not a standard modern building technique. This makes the use of volume computation of the time to build rubble walling very unsafe.

Two substantial chapters are devoted to the labour requirements for both the fortress and extramural features, amply detailed with a profusion of tables. Labour requirements for both supply of materials and for demolition are included. S. then goes on to develop a system for applying the information to other similar buildings and to forts; Strageath and Fendoch are taken as examples.

As a conclusion, S. suggests the likely workforce engaged in building the fortress, and arrives at a surprisingly small, yet plausible, number spread over the probable two seasons of work. An inevitable problem is that it is assumed that any building which was begun was completed in full; with a part-built fortress this is unlikely to be the case but it is difficult to see a better way to proceed. She then discusses the organisation of the army as a building contractor and supplier of materials. The appendix has a series of lengthy notes on all the calculations, and a useful and detailed comparison of transport by man, pack animal, cart, and wagon.

The book is very well illustrated with sketches of almost every detail considered, and the many tables make it possible for the material requirements for constructing almost any aspect of Roman military timber buildings to be quickly obtained. Like T., Shirley gives measurements below one metre in millimetres rather than centimetres, but she works to only two decimal places for sizes above a metre. The Glossary defines only one type of roof truss and makes no mention of anything to do with stonework. There is no index.

This is another very useful, indeed essential, addition to the archaeologist's shelf. Armed with both Taylor and Shirley, the archaeologist can be much better equipped when reporting on and discussing Roman building remains.

P. R. Hill

Georgina L. Irby-Massie, *Military Religion in Roman Britain* (Mnemosyne suppl. 199, Leyden/Boston/Köln, 1999), pp. xv + 387, figs. 1, ills. 4. ISBN 90 04 10848 3.

This is an interesting topic, in which the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle may claim a proprietorial interest, in view of its holdings of Roman military inscriptions and sculptures.

The structure of the book gives the gods worshipped by the army primacy of place: Roman state religion; eastern cults; local religions (two chapters); the Romanisation and politicisation of civilian(!) religion (a curious

and unconvincing chapter); late Romano-Celtic religion and Christianity. In contrast comment on the worshippers, apart from scattered references, is confined to a concluding chapter, which discusses temporal and geographical patterns in dedications, and contrasts briefly legionary and auxiliary, officers v. enlisted men, men of different geographical origin, military v. civilian. There follows a major part of the book, a catalogue of inscriptions relating to military religion (though a number are uncertainly military or even definitely civilian).

This structure reflects faithfully the strengths and weaknesses of the book. The account of the gods has been well researched, and seeks to make full usage of other finds than altars, which is welcome. Dedications and temples that have no clear military links are however allocated too much space. The question of the motive for dedications is raised in relation to imperial cult but the matter is not discussed in detail. Under festivals there is no mention of the two Vindolanda tablets, nor of the fact observed by Robin Birley that the Vindolanda tablets, apart from these two references, do not refer to religion at all.

The worshippers are not well handled. There is clear discomfort with the problem of origins. The term Romans, Italians, Romanised and native Celts/Britons are used with no great precision or certainty. This produces statements such as "Unlike other Roman provinces in the Roman empire, the ethnic make-up of the civilian population is probably largely Romano-Celtic" (p. 204) – what about Gaul? Men with *tria nomina* are identified as of Roman origin (p. 210), a term of doubtful meaning, rather than simply as claimants to Roman citizenship. Reference only to numbers in the appendix of inscriptions may hide dubious evidence e.g. the suggestion that Africans preferred Roman gods on the basis of dedications to Jupiter Best and Greatest (p. 211). Almost all the inscriptions refer to official dedications by equestrian unit commanders on behalf of their units, dedications prompted surely by their rank, social status and official military practice, rather than by an "African"

influence. The only exception is a man dubiously identified with an Egyptian. Even if the identification is valid Egypt is hardly to be linked to Roman Africa.

What is missing from this book is a full discussion of the changing geographical origins of the soldiers in Britain, and how far the original recruiting grounds of auxiliary units can be cited to explain dedications in later centuries. There should also be adequate discussion of the differences between legions and auxiliaries, senatorial and equestrian officers, equestrian officers, centurions and those below the centurionate. What was official and what was unofficial is only touched on, but raises the whole question of what the soldiers do because they have to and what they do, and finance, following their own inclinations. There is the question of where they do it, with doubt recently cast on the notion of annual ceremonies on parade grounds. A word on the inhabitants of the civil settlement, as civilians strongly influenced by the military, might be appropriate. Room could be found for these topics by some judicious pruning of non-military material and superfluous references.

The book remains a useful assembling of evidence and interpretations relating to the gods worshipped by the military which will be a stimulus to those interested in the topic.

Brian Dobson

P. Bidwell, M. Snape and A. Croom, *Hardknott Roman Fort, Cumbria, including an account of the excavations by the late Dorothy Charlesworth* (Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian And Archaeological Society Research Series Number 9, 1999) pp. viii + 134, ills. 56 ISBN 1 873124 28 7. Price: £20.

Few Roman sites in northern England express the same emotional charge as Hardknott fort, a Roman presence almost hovering over Eskdale. From the motor road the stone walls and its parade ground attest a permanence of occupation in a remote and dramatic setting. Yet as this monograph makes clear the Roman occupation was short-lived, limited to the Hadrianic and Antonine periods; probably less

time in fact than the site has been in guardianship as an archaeological monument (as David Sherlock's excellent chapter on the consolidation and maintenance on the site by the Ministry of Works and their successors demonstrates). This volume comprises the publication of the results of excavations carried out in the 1960s by Dorothy Charlesworth, then inspector of ancient monuments. The most significant discovery from her work was a fragmentary inscription of Hadrian, and Bidwell and colleagues provide accounts of the unpublished structures and stratigraphy, the small finds, glass and pottery from the fort and baths. The scale of Charlesworth's excavations was quite limited and in this volume the work on the fort amounts to only 29, rather lavish, pages, including parts of the internal buildings and the baths.

In fact what most readers will be concerned with is the authoritative introduction and history of research at Hardknott (pp. 1–21), the summary history of the fort (pp. 63–74), together with a description of a field survey conducted by the R.C.H.M.E. in 1993. The latter provides a detailed account of the earthworks within the fort and the parade ground. However, like the recent volume on Roman Maryport (ed. R. J. A. Wilson), the Commission seemed unable to allow its material to be used in collaboration by others so that there is unnecessary duplication of discussion of, for instance, the defences of Hardknott. Both survey plans in this volume use the traditional hachures to illustrate topographic features and their use is reminiscent of the maintenance of cuneiform writing (another anachronistic wedge script for an elite class) in Achaemenid Persia. For a more accessible plan of the fort in its setting the reader is recommended to use the contour plan published by R. G. Collingwood in 1928 (*CW*², 28, 314ff.). Whilst it may lack some of the detail of the more recent surveys, there can be few contour plans plotted and drawn up by an Oxford philosophy don. Collingwood's studies of Hardknott and the Lake District figure large throughout this volume and although the authors rightly challenge his interpretation of the date of Hardknott, they

also draw attention to his significance in the development of archaeological thinking about the Roman north between the two world wars. In practice this analysis is not fully developed and the impression left of Collingwood's contribution is very negative, a view of him not shared by a new generation of post-processual archaeologists.

Altogether there is much more in this volume to be praised than criticised, and in particular one should welcome the excellent colour reproductions of paintings by W.G. Collingwood. For those of us familiar with Sorrel's brooding skies above Housesteads, the reconstruction of Hardknott fort belongs to an even more romantic and dramatic realisation of an ancient place.

James Crow

Alison Ewin, *Hadrian's Wall: A Social and Cultural History* (University of Lancaster, 2000), pp. 10 + 85, many ills. ISBN 1 86220 096 3. Price £8.50.

This work seems to seek to justify consideration of Hadrian's Wall other than as an object of scholarly research, and indeed to claim that there is some particular value in regarding it as a romantic object. The reviewer's experience, over 50 years, of conducting parties along the Wall, and attempting to explain it to them, does not lead him to believe that anything has much to contribute to our understanding of the Wall other than a study of it at the most serious level. Anything other than accurate knowledge or careful study merely leads to error

For example, the Roman section of Kipling's "Puck of Pook's Hill" gives a totally misleading picture of life in a Roman province. It seems to be based on Kipling's knowledge of India under British rule, which painted a picture which he thought could be simply applied willy-nilly to Roman Britain.

One of the most difficult points to get across to visitors to the Wall is to convey a sense of what the Wall was for. British visitors in particular bring to the Wall a picture of what they remember from history lessons of the medieval period, and of the siege of medieval castles or towns. They bring an abiding image

that Walls are for standing on, and throwing down molten lead or boiling oil, or other unmentionable objects, on those who are attempting, by siege towers and catapults, to batter down the Wall and climb over it. If this happened on Hadrian's Wall, it could only have been because the whole frontier system had somehow broken down. The Roman Army, depending on good intelligence, always expected to be able to confront its foes on the open field, where its discipline and manoeuvrability would ensure that it prevailed. But Ms Ewin cannot forbear to include Robert Spence's "Night Attack" as an illustration, willy-nilly perpetuating a myth.

Early archaeologists did not always avoid the taint of Romanticism. Educated in Greek and Latin, they looked back to early Rome as a sort of Golden Age, and deliberately averted their gaze from the Later Empire. Thus in excavating fort gateways, they often swept away late blocking walls, as evidence of decadence, which they did not want to contemplate, to display the pristine structure in all its vigorous sturdiness. Our knowledge of the history of the Wall is the poorer for this.

Romanticism of another kind infects other aspects of error. Ms Ewin quotes (as "both Romantic and evocative") Walter Scott's lines:

On the rampart. . .
Where the sons of freedom braving
Rome's imperial standard flew

In what sense were those beyond the Wall "free"? The only freedom that existed there was the freedom of tribal chiefs and aristocrats to go to war and kill each other. Their subjects had no choice but to be killed with them – as at Culloden. A slave shivering in a broch in the Highlands was no more free than a slave perspiring as he toiled to keep going the furnace of the hypocaust of a Roman villa.

The serious study of the Roman Wall requires an ability to use Latin and Greek sources. We have recently had a strong reminder of this in the discovery of writing tablets at Vindolanda. No amount of Romantic dreaming about the Wall will ever conjure up a

more relevant or more reliable image of life on the northern frontier.

For the tourist or visitor to Hadrian's Wall, it is no service to purvey fuzzy, "evocative" images. Hard thinking is needed to direct the wandering mind to the accurate picture, and the passing tourist or visitor deserves no less than this from those who profess to cater for him (or her).

John Mann

H. Summerson and S. Harrison, *Lanercost Priory, Cumbria. A Survey and Documentary History*, The Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society Research Series No 10 (Carlisle, 2000), pp xii + 219, 109 figs. and pls.

The Augustinian priory at Lanercost lies in the valley bottom of the river Irthing. The situation seems idyllic and peaceful, but the recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease has shown all too clearly how fragile that outlook can be. If one delves even slightly into the history of the priory and its surroundings one soon becomes aware that it has all too often had anything but a peaceful past. Instead it suffered both through its position close to the Scottish border (the priory was overrun by the Scots several times) and of course through Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. Perhaps the most remarkable event of its medieval usage, however, was the prolonged residence of King Edward I from September 1306 to March 1307. This stay was due to the king's ill-health rather than a more deliberate choice, but it must still rank as one of the longest sojourns of a medieval English monarch within a monastery. This is an interesting contrast with the activities of several later medieval Scottish kings who effectively turned parts of monastic cloisters into royal palaces (e.g. at Dunfermline and Holyrood).

After the Dissolution Lanercost underwent significant changes which were to affect the survival of its buildings down to the present day. Parts of the abbey church were retained in parochial use by the local people (as also happened at Dorchester on Thames, another

Augustinian priory), and much of the precinct survived intact in the landscape. Parts of the remaining priory buildings (especially on the west side of the cloister) were converted into private residential ranges. Elsewhere, however, buildings were either systematically demolished to foundation level or unroofed and left ruinous. The parish struggled with the upkeep of the church almost from the beginning, and the maintenance of such important historic fabric continues to be a major financial commitment for its people.

Although its preservation is variable, Lanercost is an extremely important site for students of monasticism in all its forms. This is not because it was a wealthy house – far from it. The level of endowments and income enjoyed by the likes of Rievaulx and Fountains was nothing but a distant dream for the Augustinian brethren here. They seem to have been few in number (perhaps 12 or so) for most of their history, and were largely dependent on one or two patrons for their lands and income. These kind of poor to middling houses have received relatively little attention in the past, but they are undoubtedly of considerable interest in their own right.

This report on recent research at and into Lanercost Priory makes the point rather well. Its two principal contributors (Summerson and Harrison) deal with the site's history and its buildings respectively, while there are several shorter contributions on (for example) the stones used in its construction, geophysical surveys, wall paintings in the Dacre Hall, and tomb monuments. The volume is not fully comprehensive, as the authors would doubtless be the first to accept. The Victorian and other fixtures and fittings in the church are not covered in any detail, for instance, and the farm buildings from the same era are also only dealt with in passing. This is not entirely surprising given the sheer breadth of material to be covered at Lanercost, but these are important aspects of the site's overall impression on the visitor and it is unfortunate that they could not be included.

Summerson's historical overview is extensive, fluent and fascinating. It is sub-divided into

a sequence of thematic and broadly chronological sections following the site through from the days before the priory's foundation up to (almost) the present day. The financial strictures on the development and maintenance of the buildings run as a major theme virtually from start to finish. So too does the almost perverse doggedness of first the monastic community and then the parish in ensuring that the buildings did go up and then get looked after. Equally the author makes clear the debt owed by successive generations of inhabitants and users of the priory to the families (successively de Vaux, Dacre and Howard) who have been its major benefactors.

Harrison is equally thorough with his consideration of the buildings, commencing with the church and monastic structures and gradually working outwards to the Vicarage, outer gatehouse and precinct wall. This chapter is well illustrated, with particularly good photographs of salient features. The drawings are useful but are often at too small a scale to show up the finer architectural details being described. There are two figures (52 and 53) of moulding profiles which could help in this respect, but they are not referenced in the text – an unfortunate omission which does not help the reader. The distribution of the drawings in the text is also somewhat awkward, so that one regularly has to move backwards and forwards over several pages to check specific descriptive points on the illustrations. It may well have been impossible to avoid this given the number of figures required, and fortunately it does not detract too seriously from such a thorough presentation of the evidence. There are points of interpretation one might question (e.g. the curious roof angle to pick up the lower rather than the upper weathering course on the south transept, Figure 36; or the positioning of the horizontal building break in Figure 40). Otherwise this is an excellent presentation of the structural evidence.

The remaining shorter chapters are all useful and, in several instances, very important contributions. The wall paintings in the Dacre Hall are exceptional, for instance, while the cross-shaft and base is of incomparable significance

for the site's history. It has to be said, however, that there has been little apparent effort to edit them together into a seamless descriptive flow. Once again this may not have been practicable, or perhaps even desirable, but it does make the whole volume feel slightly disjointed.

Having said that, it would be churlish in the extreme to end this review on a negative note. The volume is generally an excellent piece of work, and undoubtedly it is an important contribution to monastic studies. It is unlikely to be the final word – how could it be when so much more remains to be discovered at this magnificent site? It is, though, an exceptional description of an exceptional site.

Graham Keevill

Peter Brett, *The Grey Monument: the Making of a Regional Landmark*, Papers in Northern History, 10 (University of Teesside, 2000), pp. 44. Price £4.95.

This admirable booklet does more than chart the erection of Grey's monument in Newcastle upon Tyne: Peter Brett demonstrates how the monument has been a symbol of several changing perspectives on Grey's career and the meaning of the Great Reform Act down the years. He is well informed and perceptive in dealing with the transition from triumphalist

Whig versions of Grey's career to the more carefully nuanced interpretations of modern historians, but he also has a good eye for popular responses to the monument and what it was seen as representing. He provides colourful examples of Tory rage and radical anger as well as the self-congratulatory rhetoric of Whigs and Liberals. Aware of recent discussions of "the making of tradition" he acknowledges the influence of post-modernism, even though he concludes by saying that relative permanence and continuity with the past had been central objectives for Grey when framing the Reform Act of 1832 and that at the beginning of the twenty-first century the future for his monument looks "remarkably secure". His discussion of Grey's personality and political outlook is particularly incisive, and within a small compass he paints a vivid picture of local political activity in the 1830s and 1840s. A monument which was originally seen as an ostentatious demonstration of Whig partisanship became a symbol of "civic and regional identity". There is one misleading statement, made when referring to the monument being struck by lightning in July 1941: at that date British troops were not yet struggling with "losses in the Far East".

John Derry