

## BOOK REVIEWS

*These contributions are published as the views of the persons who write them and are accepted in good faith as accurate and honest expressions of opinion.*

Stephen J. Sherlock, *Late Prehistoric Settlement in the Tees Valley and North-East* (Tees Archaeology Monograph Series No. 5) Hartlepool, 2011, ix + 189 pages, 73 figs, 6 plates. ISBN 978-0-9532747-4-1. £15.00 plus £5.00 p&p.

This volume is based on a PhD submitted to Leicester University in 2011. It offers a regional synthesis of the Iron Age and early Romano-British settlement archaeology of Yorkshire and Durham, concentrating on the Tees Valley. A tremendous amount of new information has been compiled, much of it not yet in the public domain. The author has worked on many of the sites discussed and led excavations at important new sites at Streethouse Farm and Kilton Thorpe, in Redcar and Cleveland District. The results from the detailed study enable the argument to be made that the Tees Valley is broadly representative of Durham and the North Riding as a whole, and that this area has a cultural identity that is distinct from the regions to the north and south. Of particular interest to our readers will be the assessment of the character of the impact of the Roman Conquest, and the description of the ways in which the rural community (there were no towns in the Tees Valley) responded to the occupation, being for much of the Roman period in the military zone south of the Imperial Frontier. The four northern-most villas in the country come into the scope of the study. With a wealth of information on settlement form, structures, finds and depositional practices, furnished with copious illustrations and data tables, and an HER gazetteer with over 1,600 sites, this is an essential reference book for anyone studying this period.

David Heslop

Jennifer Proctor, *Faverdale, Darlington. Excavations at a major settlement in the northern frontier zone of Roman Britain* (Pre-Construct Archaeology Monograph 15) London 2012, pp. 245, 108 illus. ISBN 978-0-9563054-6-6. £20.

This is an exemplary account of the discovery, excavation and interpretation of a complex and long-lived settlement of a type that, in current thinking, defies convenient categorisation. Starting in the late Iron Age, and with three cist burials in this early stage, occupation follows an unfamiliar trajectory. An unenclosed, Conquest-period farmstead of some status developed as an agricultural production centre but there was also, tantalisingly, evidence of industrial manufacture in the form of mortaria wasters, two possible examples having the stamp of a known potter ('ANAUS'). The buildings had painted wall plaster, and the settlement appears to expand and decline periodically through the Roman period.

Despite having a total of 36 other contributors, the account retains a clear coherence, bearing the stamp of the principal author's vision for the project. This means that the research themes are not submerged in a sea of data. The discussion is both readable and academically relevant, addressing the major issues of the period in the frontier region, particularly how the locals responded to the occupying authority, embracing some aspects but clearly rejecting others. There is much food for thought here in conceptualizing the historical narrative of the Imperial Project in northern Britain. The volume is a great credit to the team that completed

the project and a clear demonstration of Pre-Construct Archaeology's commitment to research archaeology in a commercial context. I wish that this could be said of all archaeological contractors.

David Heslop

Fraser Hunter and Lawrence Keppie (eds.), *A Roman Frontier Fort and its People: Newstead 1911–2011* (National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2012). pp. 288, illus 163. ISBN 978 1905267 75 0. £30.

The fort of Newstead lies on the Dere Street crossing of the Tweed, close by the three Eildon hills, which lent the site its Roman name, *Trimontium*. This was the most important military centre in south-east Scotland throughout the first- and second-century occupations. From 1905 to 1910 the site was excavated by a local solicitor, James Curle, and published by him in the absolutely classic *A Roman Frontier Post and its People: the Fort of Newstead* (1911). The present lavishly illustrated collection of essays celebrates the centenary of a report that, as Fraser Hunter says in his introduction, was far ahead of its time, integrating different categories of evidence and drawing on the latest continental archaeological scholarship. But this is more than a celebration of past antiquarian endeavour: it is a really useful stocktaking of what is known a century on about a Roman site in Britain that, thanks to Curle's book, truly enjoys an international reputation.

An impressive range of topics is covered: place-name and ancient geographical evidence (Keppie); a sensible overview of the fort's history and garrisons (Hanson); Curle himself, the social history of his excavations, and the present day Trimontium Trust (D. V. Clarke and Gordon); roads and river crossing (S. Clarke, Lonie); coins, inscriptions and art (Holmes, Birley, Henig); military equipment (Bishop); fieldwalking finds (Elliott, Fraser); the local Iron Age context (Dent); and the end of the Roman site (Breeze). A word of warning: this is not the final publication, nor does it contain any new interim reporting of, the more recent excavations undertaken at Newstead from 1989 to 1996.

Outstandingly useful are two substantial interpretations of the aerial photographs of the Newstead complex by David Cowley and Rebecca Jones, and a brilliant study by the German archaeologist Sebastian Sommer of the occupation in the 'annexes' — the enclosures attached to the main fort that are such a conspicuous feature in both Flavian and Antonine periods. This is based in part on a careful study of the brief interim reports from the unpublished 1989–96 investigations and represents the most important critical assessment of these reports to date.

Put simply, this is a collection that no student of the Roman military North can do without, and it is also packed with interest for the general reader. The sheer heft and handsomeness of the book rather disguise the uncertainties and disagreements that abound in the interpretation of Newstead: beneath the glossy surface some of the contributors are worlds apart. For Sommer, the annexes are populated by civilian camp-followers, immigrants imbued with Mediterranean values and with little contact with the surrounding indigenous population. To Dent, supposedly 'native' elements among the finds from the annexes indicate 'indigenous workmanship' and a 'close relationship between the subject population and occupying forces'. That such contrasting views can be presented between the same covers illustrates how much there still is to find out about even such a well-known site as Newstead.

Nick Hodgson

Rob Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire: The Roman Frontier in the 4th and 5th centuries* (Routledge, 2012, London), pp. xviii + 214; 38 illus. ISBN 978 0 415 88411 2. £85.

Debate about what happened on Hadrian's Wall when imperial control collapsed in the early fifth century revolves around two scenarios, known as the short and long chronologies. The former sees frontier security rapidly disintegrate as the *limitanei* were withdrawn or dispersed. The latter proposes more gradual change, with former army units holding their forts and slowly mutating into warbands that formed the nucleus of Early Medieval kingdoms.

Rob Collins argues forcefully in this book, based on his doctoral thesis, for the long chronology. Focusing on the military community and indigenous population during a transitional period spanning the fourth to sixth centuries, C. also sets the scene by considering pre-Roman tribal territories and the early years of Hadrian's Wall. A chapter examining accelerating regionalisation elsewhere in the late Empire sets his conclusions in their wider context.

Dating fifth-century layers is notoriously difficult, but evidence for the long chronology has accumulated following Tony Wilmott's seminal 1987–92 excavations at Birdoswald, which revealed that there was no break between 'military' occupation of the fort and the construction of 'sub-Roman' timber halls. Stratigraphic sequences extending into the fifth century have since been observed at South Shields, Vindolanda, and Carlisle. C. brings all of these data together to create a wide-ranging account of the processes under way in the late frontier zone.

Once it became clear that imperial control was permanently severed, local political dynamics must have shifted dramatically. C. is surely right that 'former allies or neighbours may have become fierce rivals, and traditional enemies may have become valued allies.' He subscribes to the view, proposed by various authorities, of a fifth-century landscape where patched-up second-century forts fulfilled the role of Early Medieval hillforts elsewhere. This finds support in the effort expended on maintaining fort defences. Appropriately perhaps, as expertise with stone dwindled, masonry ramparts were repaired with turf and timber, making them ever more visually akin to their hillfort counterparts. Sheltered within these walls, 'Roman military officers and their descendants probably formed the core of an Early Medieval warrior aristocracy'.

Fifth-century material is concentrated in the forts, and these installations dominate this study. Yet the status of the Wall curtain remains important to perceptions of the late frontier. C. is perhaps too quick to assert that 'there is very little [fourth-century] evidence from turrets along the Wall indicating occupation, and what there is typically suggests squatter occupation. . .' Widespread toleration of such unofficial habitation would imply that military control of the curtain was no longer a priority, but the evidence for squatters is ambiguous. Equally, the conspicuous quantity of timber nails found in turret 44b, which produced a coin of Valens, could signal that the hybrid stone and wood defences seen in forts also occurred along the frontier curtain.

Not cheap, this volume is an essential contribution to discourse about Rome's immediate legacy in northern England. The illustrations include five striking reconstruction drawings, among them a new take on the phase 6b timber hall at Birdoswald. More humble than the familiar original, it is an evocative symbol of the transition from a centrally appointed commanding officer living in Mediterranean opulence to a local warlord feasting his followers in Early Medieval style.

Matthew Symonds

Jeremy Ashbee and Julian Luxford (eds.), *Newcastle and Northumberland: Roman and Medieval Architecture and Art* (Legenda, Oxford, 2013), pp. viii + 278, 171 illus. ISBN 978 1 907975 93 6. £36.

In 2010 the British Archaeological Association held its annual conference in Newcastle. This very welcome and well produced volume contains the bulk of the excellent and innovative papers that were presented then, covering a wide spectrum. Each contribution provides a up-to-date review of research, and together they offer an external perspective on buildings and topics that are so familiar to us that we may sometimes fail to appreciate fully their national and international importance.

After an excellent summary of the development of Newcastle itself (by David Heslop and Grace McCombie), there is a paper on the sculpture found locally from the Roman period (Martin Henig), and another on the equally rich assemblage from later seventh- and eighth-century Bernicia (Jane Hawkes). St Cuthbert's extraordinary reliquary coffin is considered in a fresh light, as a sacred vessel (Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Juliet Mullins), and the evidence for the long continuance of a tradition of pilgrimage to the Cuthbertine shrines on Lindisfarne and Inner Farne is set out (Emma Wells). Advances in microscopy have led to an analysis of the use of colour in the iconography and meaning of the Lindisfarne Gospels (Heather Pulliam).

Steven Brindle reviews the evidence for the construction and design of the Keep at Newcastle — both palace and prison — with a series of fascinating reconstructions; John Goodall disentangles the early phases of the castle at Alnwick and places them in context; and Frank Woodman muses whether the planning of the castle at Warkworth reflects the desire of the Percy family to protect its womenfolk. In a series of absorbing maps, Philip Dixon continues his exploration of the towers on each side of the Border, focusing not just on the buildings themselves but also on social structures and changes in prosperity. The priories at Hexham and at Tynemouth are extensively treated in a series of articles. Jennifer Alexander explores the disruptions in the construction of the church at Hexham; Charles Tracy the form and iconography of the pulpitum; and John Crook examines the documentary evidence for the role of the cults of particular saints in the life of the priory. The architectural history of glorious Tynemouth is meticulously summarised by Richard Fawcett, and this is complemented by a study by Julian Luxford of the ways in which the surviving books that were held in the priory reflect the historical and aesthetic interests of the monks themselves.

Humphrey Welfare

Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society publications:

Roger Smalley, *Agitate! Educate! Organise! Political Dissent in Westmorland from 1880–1930*. (Extra Series, 38, 2013), pp. viii + 112, 16 illus. ISBN 978 1873124 59 8. £15.

Rob David, *Cumbria and the Arctic in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Extra Series, 39, 2013), pp. xiv + 133, 78 illus. ISBN 978 1873124 60 4. £18.

Roger H. Leech and Richard A. Gregory, *Cockermouth, Cumbria: Archaeological Investigation of Three Burgage Plots in Main Street* (Cumbria Archaeological Research Reports, 3, 2012), pp. x + 80, 56 illus. ISBN 978 1873124 56 7. £12.

Jan Walker and Mark Graham, *St Mary's Abbey, Holme Cultram, Abbey Town, Cumbria*, (Cumbria Archaeological Research Reports, 4, 2013), pp. x + 127, 69 illus. ISBN 978 1873124 61 1. £10.

Our sister society has an ambitious, wide-ranging and successful programme of publication, as this recent sample of titles amply demonstrates. Roger Smalley's excellent book focuses on dissent in a single English county. These are the extraordinary (and often shocking) stories of bravery, born of conviction, as each issue moves towards the political mainstream: women's suffrage; workers' representation; the Labour Party; pacifism; and the changes in the distribution of political power. No less surprising and intriguing are the polar adventures of Cumbrians: explorers, whalers, seekers for the North-West Passage, and the Earl of Lonsdale's retreat from scandal to the Canadian Arctic. A gazetteer of Cumbrian places allows these historical vignettes to be followed up. The Society's archaeological monographs now include an account of Cockermouth that relates directly to Robin Tait's paper on burgage plots in *AA*<sup>4</sup>, 40 (2011), and an account of geophysics and excavation within the abbey precincts at Holme Cultram.

Humphrey Welfare

