# THE MACFARLANE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, CONEYHILL

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John Macfarlane of Coneyhill is a neglected figure in the history of Stirling, where he was born in 1785, and in the study of natural history in Scotland. In the mid-nineteenth century he had a high profile in both fields and his strident opinions were made known even after his death at Bridge of Allan in 1868. He is buried in the Holy Rude cemetery but scant traces of his legacy can be traced for what they were. He is a mere shadow in the background of his internationally famous grandson the pioneer oceanographer Sir John Murray. No longer is there a Macfarlane Street or a Macfarlane Terrace in Bridge of Allan and properties he built are not identified with his name. The Macfarlane Museum of Natural History, the pride of his old age and his intended monument, no longer exists.

The Stirling of his youth was a textile town as well as a garrison. He made a career and substantial fortune once he left the town for Glasgow and Manchester as a textile designer, producer and merchant. He had a strong entrepreneurial streak and promoted many ideas before his time while speculating also in the new gas and railway developments and in property. He is credited with moving the commercial heart of Manchester out of the congested mediaeval centre by building substantial warehouses which he then leased to other merchants. They remain there with a new lease of life as Manchester's Merchant City clubs and apartments a century and a half later.

While in Manchester he was in the van of the new organizations for knowledge, the Mechanics Institute, the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and other worthy bodies which broadened his fertile imagination far beyond that of being a 'Scotch commission agent'. He still held his native town in esteem and endeavoured to enlighten a disinterested Stirling Town council. He proposed a canal from Dunmore to an enlarged Stirling harbour and a canal on to Balloch in 1835, a school of design for which he commissioned plaster casts of antique statuary in 1843, a free public library, a reading room and gondolas on the Forth from the Rowing Club for which he provided a cup and a boat, all before his retiral from Manchester about 1845.

In Manchester he had formed a lasting friendship with fellow Scot and contemporary Captain Thomas Brown, an ardent naturalist and author of textbooks on natural history and taxidermy, who in 1838 became Curator of the Manchester Natural History Society. It seems that Macfarlane's interest was caught then but it was not until later it developed into a passion. On retirement he returned North and settled in Bridge of Allan. He leased and later bought the small estate of Coneyhill from his cousin, Major John Henderson, the laird of Westerton and feudal superior of the village. He lived first in Ivy Lodge, the renamed House of Coneyhill now called the Old Manor, which he improved and extended. Speculative building continued in his retirement in his own

lands. He built a row of workmen's cottages and what is now Coneyhill Road with several large villas which he then rented out. His largest and most ambitious building was to be a three storey museum on Macfarlane Terrace created at the top of his new Coneyhill Road and begun when he was already 75.

The building and its contents would have been quite forgotten were it not for the chance discovery of 'Macfarlane's Letter Book No. 2' by Dr. Margaret Deacon of the Southampton Oceanography Centre among the archives of Sir John Murray at the Natural History Museum in London a few years ago. It covers the period November 1860 to April 1863 when, as a teenager, Murray became Curator to his grandfather. Murray, after the death of his father, had been brought over from Canada to attend Stirling High School for a year and to live with and be directed in life by his grandfather. The Dr W.H. Welsh Educational and Historical Trust for Bridge of Allan had a microfilm made of the letter book and this is now in Stirling Archives. As it is No. 2 then there must have been earlier correspondence by Macfarlane and maybe a later one since he lived to 1868. Among his disputes over the Wallace Monument, the Stirling Free Library, the Rowing Club and Stirling Council the main theme is a record of his building of his museum and his purchases before it opened and in its first two years.

It is known that the teenage Murray made a collection of the flora and natural history of the area and showed aptitude for the sciences while at Stirling High School. There is speculation that Macfarlane accelerated his own collecting and building to provide a career for his grandson as curator of a grand design: Scotland's Natural History Museum. The collecting was not random but by species and scientifically based with constant recourse to Captain Brown at Manchester Natural History Society. Macfarlane intended it to be the largest such museum after London and to rival an Edinburgh University collection held in their Department of Natural History. This was later subsumed into the new National Museum of Science and Arts for Scotland being planned around this time. Captain Brown had made purchases for Edinburgh before he went off to be curator in Manchester in 1838 and knew its scope. Macfarlane appears to have been collecting natural history books to support the physical exhibits from at least 1854 so his animal and birds buying may date earlier. He was no stranger to obsessive collecting. The plaster sculptures, rejected by Stirling Council, along with other curiosities had been exhibited in a hall in Bridge of Allan village, opposite the Westerton Arms, to entertain and enlighten visitors to the spa since 1846.

The rapid expansion of exploration in the mid-Victorian period constantly revealed new species of birds and animals from various continents. In such pre-David Attenborough days there were only crude wood or steel engravings as illustrations in books and periodicals, usually uncoloured, but the advance of taxidermy made it possible for Macfarlane to add to his other exhibits. His cousin, Major Henderson, a man of related enthusiasms and entrepreneurial bent, was keen to have attractions for the developing spa particularly if he could charge for viewing.

The hall, built in the village by Henderson, became too small and Macfarlane was living on his own estate from 1848 so he eventually decided to build his own halls and charge his own fees for entry. It all coincided with his idea to build the row of cottages and villas thus extending his properties into a Bridge of Allan East or Coney Hill Village around his own house. The main village did not extend much beyond Mine Road which was cut through the Lower Westerton Wood in 1844 as main access to the spa above. The museum he now planned was a plain three storey factory-type building on this level. It was on an old raised beach to form a terrace and is now occupied by a very modern house below Logie Aston House on Kenilworth Road. It looked over the carse, his cottages, Mount Hope and his own new house Edgehill opposite on Coneyhill Road. He let out the original Coneyhill/Ivy Lodge and by 1863 was building a new Coneyhill House on the high part of his estate entered from 'the Eagle Gates' already erected as a feature to his grounds before 1861 and which also probably served as entrance to the museum.

The first copied letter, dated 8 November 1860, to Captain Thomas Brown is quite informative about his operations. He had bought skins from J.C. Stevens of London, an auctioneer and taxidermy dealer used by Brown as well, and suggests the cheapest way to send bulk items from London was by sea to

Eagle Gates entrance to the Macfarlane Museum of Natural History, now the entrance to Coneyhill House, Kenilworth Road, built 1863.

Grangemouth as now there was a new railway link to Stirling and Bridge of Allan. As the story unfolds one wonders how the porters at Bridge of Allan station reacted to large crates of stuffed specimens or boxes of very dead ones requiring skinning which then had to be carted the length of the village to Coneyhill.

The museum building was already occupied and even receiving visitors, 'Stirling of Keir accompanied by Lord John Manners. They had no conception that so large a collection of Natural History existed in this part of the world.' The third storey was about finished and roofing to start the next week. He went on to discuss a tiger skin he wanted from Stevens and his need for flying squirrels, Australian pelican, a kangaroo and butterflies 'if got cheap'. He always states carefully the specimen's sex he needed, the gaps in genera he wished to fill and the condition. Skins were to be sent first to Brown in Manchester for stuffing but cased pieces came direct.

The building progressed slowly because of the weather and delays by the glazier up to Christmas. By January 1861 he was busy furnishing the interior and had no place to store extra specimens which were not in cases. By April he reported to Brown that more than 100 had signed their names in the visitor's book so it seems the major collection was open as soon as the season for spa tourists began in March 1861. Next month there was a decision on a steam pipe heating system, commenced in June. Up to this time it appears to have been called Coney Hill Institution but in July new labels were ordered for books which read *The Macfarlane Museum of Natural History and Gallery of Casts and Paintings*. The latter he bought as job lots, refusing to pay more than £5 for them as the public did not know quality or the difference in his estimation. All the time he was adding specimens and even building an extension until in May 1862 he had to refuse purchase of a set of Gould's Birds of Asia as 'I have overdone my funds in the building works etc. I have been erecting lately and, for the present, I have to suspend the building of the New Museum Additional and I have to pause …'. In addition to extending the museum, which was to include a reading room and the library of natural history books, there was a cottage for the boiler man/janitor. This was on Macfarlane Terrace, the name given to the old shore line ledge which began at Coneyhill Road and went below Logie Aston and Arrochar Villa (later manse for Chalmers Free Church) to come up on Kenilworth Road near the Chalton Road junction at Lea Cottage.

It was not the building that was important but the contents. Their purchase by correspondence, with Macfarlane's reports to Brown give an idea of the scope since no collections catalogue is known to exist. There are eleven letters to J.C. Stevens, the auctioneer of skins and taxidermy at King Street, Covent Garden and no less than fifty four to Captain Brown about the collection, work on displays and the deliveries of specimens. In addition he wrote to menagerie owners to take newly dead beasts off their hands at a small cost. In 1863 he was in dispute with Manders Menagerie, Lothian Road, Edinburgh over the state of a lion too decayed to skin and he sent it back. He sent his grandson to Perth to

bargain over a giraffe that died there and bought it for 15 guineas. At one point he tried to do a deal with London Zoo to get the first refusal on carcases after the London Natural History Museum made their choice. It was not productive since a year later he comments to Brown 'The Zoological Gardens, London must be uncommonly healthy for I am made no offer.' He tried the same deal with Bellevue Zoo, Manchester also unproductively. However he did get a very dusty leopard from Macclesfield Museum when it was sold up and wrote Brown for advice on cleaning it.

His purchases were birds in cases or as skins, animals of all sizes even up to a young elephant, butterflies and moths in collections and shells in quantity. In a dispute over access rights for Macfarlane Terrace in 1863 he wrote to Mr France, Lord Abercromby's factor for the adjacent Airthrey Estate feus, that he could not 'sell any part of my property on account of my museum which has cost me more than £4000.' This would include building, buying the stock and library as well as the education of young John Murray. He was sent to France to assess the Jardin des Plantes in Paris for comparison with his grandfather's aspirations and had French lessons from a private tutor lodged at the house.

The scope of the collection was in fact world wide. By the start of the No. 2 Letter Book, November 1860, he must have had a large basic European stock since he specified the animals and birds of non-European origin that he required. He exhibited the first llama ever seen in Scotland and would have been astonished that 140 years later live ones graze the paddocks of Drumdruills. He already had enough kinds of monkeys and sufficient lions but wanted a different lioness in a recumbent position so that his cubs could be seen to climb over it in a group. When his relative Sir James Edward Alexander of Westerton was sent to New Zealand with his regiment in 1861 during Maori disturbances he took the opportunity to try to obtain a frigate bird and various kiwis via him or the secretary to Governor Gray. Lady Alexander was enlisted to prime officers going on shooting expeditions up country to look out for native fauna.

Sometimes his purchases were much closer to home from fellow collectors in Glasgow, from Small & Sons in Edinburgh or Buffon & Wilson in London both of whom were taxidermists and skin dealers. A single dealing was with Gordon Cumming, known as The Lion Killer, to help pay off the debt on his museum in Fort Augustus when he sold off some items. Young Murray was sent up on an educational trip to see the Caledonian Canal but also to spy out the opposition which was aimed at the tourist trade in that area.

The concentration is on quadrupeds and birds from Australasia and Africa with some American as well. Cases of butterflies or insects are bought as lots and not specified apart from some locusts. He considered buying fossils but then demurred when his funds were stretched. However he cannot resist a stuffed hammer head shark and some echinoderms that were offered. When it came to shells he relied on Captain Brown, a conchology specialist since his early Edinburgh days and who came up to Bridge of Allan to identify and arrange that part of the displays during special visits for four or five years

consecutively.

Macfarlane was anxious to get Australian rarities such as black swans, the Tasmanian thylacine, kangaroos of various types and a Murray River crocodile so he could compare it with his Egyptian one, his Indian gavial and alligator from America. From India he acquired the skins of male and female thar and was chasing several dealers and menagerie owners for a really large Bengal tiger. Eventually he got one and convinced himself it was one of the largest ever seen in the country. Size mattered and he was not content until he replaced his armadillo and flying foxes with better specimens. Both hippo and camel, stuffed by Brown, were young beasts as was his elephant when it died in Manchester. He was very anxious for Brown to send it, repeatedly asking when it would arrive and then suddenly having to ask if it would go through a 3 foot 6 inch wide door.

For some of the quadrupeds he had to be content with a head with horns, the oryx and buffalo. His giraffe, designated by the old name of camel leopard, was to stand 13 feet when stuffed and one wonders how it then travelled from Manchester. He had three kinds of anteater, including the echidna from Australia, his Canadian lynx that cost him £6 was in a case complete with prey, the polar bear was small but the black bear more satisfying and he finally got two different hyenas. The greyhound he wanted put on a plinth which may have been of more local origin. Sculptured greyhounds are at the lodges of Keir House and a stone one is still on a wall of what was the back carriage drive of Manchester House, a villa he built about this time.

When it came to birds he had very large collections along with the symbolic stone eagles on his gateposts. Many of these were bought as cased lots but others were skins which he had stuffed loose with instructions that the wires came out of the feet for Murray to mount in displays by family groups or country of origin. Once he got his black necked swans he had seven different species and like all Victorians who collected he know his eagles, owls and particularly pheasants well enough to challenge a dealer who sent him the wrong type. The birds of paradise were sent back or the price discounted if they lacked all the correct feathers of displaying mode. Some birds he bought in lots he then sold off once he got another better one or which was just duplicate. The larger birds had to include secretary bird and full size ostrich while multiple humming birds, canaries and finches filled smaller cases. Wistfully he asked Brown if there was a dodo held in Manchester and it is unfortunate none of Browns replies survive.

Although nearly 80 years of age he continued collecting until he had to add two 60 foot long rooms to the original building with additional rooms above for smaller displays, cases of shells and the reading room hung with nearly 300 pictures of which he says only a dozen were fine. This he described as an Intellectual Lounge for the visitors who could take out tickets at weekly, monthly or quarterly rates with a family annual ticket costing a guinea. His own villas were rented by the half year and over winter lets. This was a place to go for entertainment or self improvement and when he had a free open day

in 1863 to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales some 972 visited the premises. Astutely he also had waxworks of the royal family at the time then sold them off for £100 afterwards. Entry was otherwise a shilling for casual callers or three pence for children since it was educational.

Although called Coney Hill Institute originally and collected on scientific lines there was no provision for further study at higher level. It never aspired to be a mechanics institute and he had given up on his earlier idea of a school of design. The letter book finishes a few months after Macfarlane read in his Saturday copy of the Manchester Guardian that Brown had died. He wrote to Brown's widow on 13 October 1862: "It was entirely on your husband's good offices that enabled me to make my fine collection of Natural History – In fact, I may state that he was its Founder and whatever merit … it is entirely his and to whom alone it belongs." Certainly Brown's enthusiasm and special knowledge carried all along to the extent that he was lax about his accounts. Some years before Macfarlane had given to Brown a silver tea service in appreciation and now had to settle up with Brown's lawyer a bill for £182.9.2, hitherto neglected.

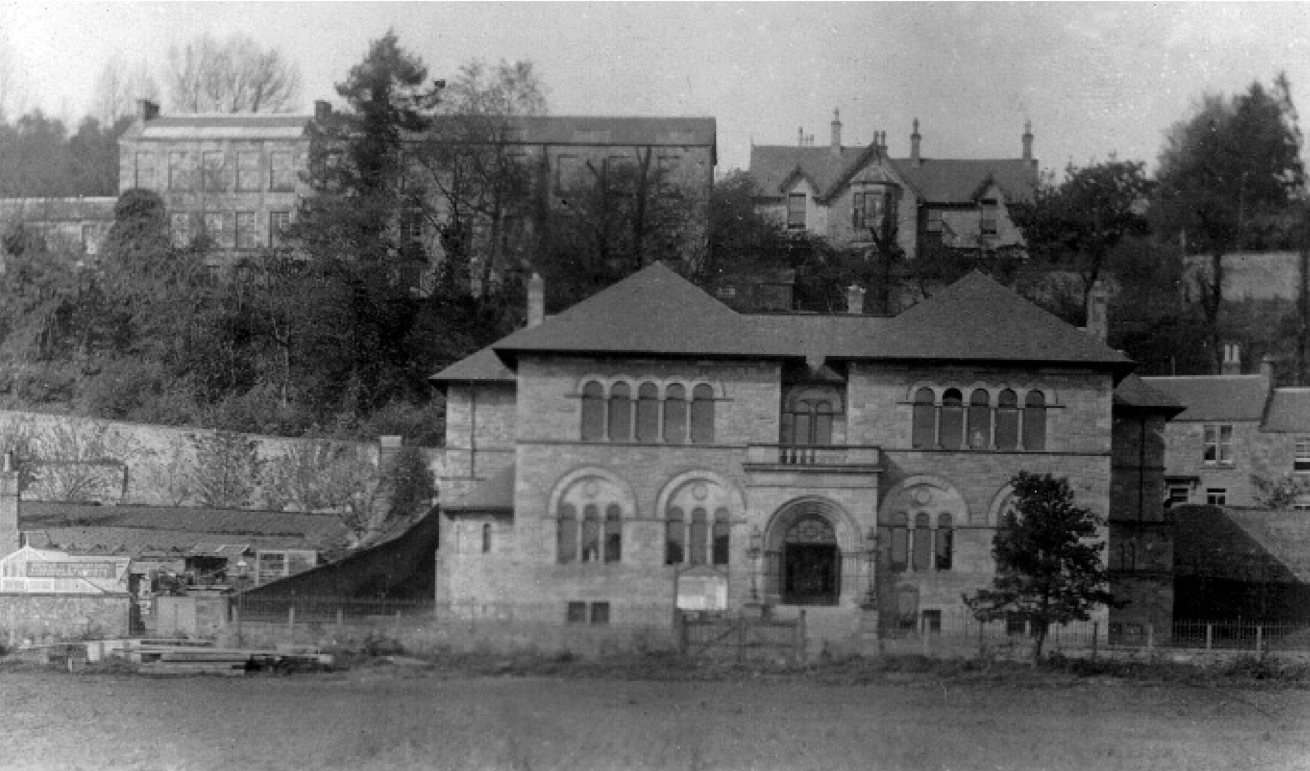
Macfarlane, always a difficult and trenchant man in business matters, now suffered bouts of ill health himself which did not improve his temper. He disputed his feu line and drainage through his property with the Airthrey factor, then with Lord Abercromby himself who was now feuing his land for villas and changing road alignments. He does not seem to manage to get his Lordship to come to see the museum and pointedly wrote to him: 'I consider this undertaking of mine will be a great boon to the families residing in the Eastern parts of the locality – so far distant as they are from the village of The Bridge of Allan, as it will be to your Lordship and visitors when at the castle …'. He told Mr France it was 'the most extensive museum of Natural History in all Scotland or even in England out of London.' Indeed the guide book 'A week at Bridge of Allan' by Rev. Charles Rogers in its 10$^{th}$ edition of 1865 describes 'a place of remarkable attraction. The Museum includes a succession of apartments in two storeys of the building, and considerable additions are in progress of construction. The catalogue includes 20,000 specimens in conchology, upwards of 500 in ornithology and about 300 quadrupeds. The walls are decorated with interesting paintings, very amusing musical tableaux and a great variety of decorations. There is an optical saloon, fitted with valuable philosophical apparatus, and many eminently interesting objects. Finely executed casts from the antique have been added to the museum.'

This is the fullest description we have of the contents during Macfarlane's lifetime and almost the last. Macfarlane died in August 1868 aged 83 but by that time his grandson, after six months study at Edinburgh University and a major dispute with his irascible grandfather, had left. With a few courses of anatomy Murray first went as medical officer on a whaling trip to Greenland and returned on the very day his grandfather died. In that same year the Perthshire Natural History Museum was founded in Perth, birthplace of Captain Brown, but neither he nor his fellow enthusiast lived to see it.

Miller's *Handbook of Central Scotland*, 3rd edition of 1872, commented on the collections in much higher figures: ornithology 6000 specimens, mammalian 700, and add 20,000 specimens of minerals. The Erskine's *Guide to Bridge of Allan & Neighbourhood* of 1901 is the only one to comment that natural history items were in the new hall built by Macfarlane's Trustees in 1886. It had been intended that it be called the Macfarlane Institute but because part of the collections were displayed there it was always referred to as The Museum Hall. The museum function diminished as the main part, with casts of a section of the Elgin marbles along the balcony, was mainly used for public events and for concerts. The old hall of 1860 remained behind it, at the top of Coneyhill Road, until it was demolished in 1905 and Macfarlane Terrace closed off.

During the First World War the Museum Hall of 1886 was requisitioned and occupied by troops (as it was again during World War II). Some animals remained on view but a local story told that Macfarlane's prize Bengal tiger was used by them for bayonet practice! While the Museum Hall was run by Macfarlane's Trustees it faced bankruptcy in 1929. It was restored in 1930 and bought for the burgh council but the decaying beasts were removed. Most went to the burgh coup where a future archaeologist may ponder on the exotic fauna of this region even before global warming. Pictures and local history, with some birds in cases and the plaster casts ended up in the Smith Museum and Art Gallery, Stirling. Much was too decayed to retain or hazardous because of arsenic used in taxidermy so with their woodwormed cases there was another throwing away by 1970. Sir John died in 1914, famous for his oceanographic expedition on The Challenger and his editing of the reports. It is possible that, as the senior trustee, he gave some of his duplicate findings from that to his grandfather's museum which had started him on a remarkable career. His geological collections there suffered a much more ignominious fate as bottoming for the new road in the burgh about 1930.

All that remains are the eagle gateposts to my house, some pictures, casts and local history objects in The Smith and a marble bust of John Macfarlane. It was discovered in the café of the Albert Hall just a few years ago where he was decorated with a woolly hat and scarf having been dumped by Stirling Council, the successor to the one he tried to enlighten from his own pocket in the first half of the nineteenth century …. Sic transit Gloria etc. .



The only known photograph of the Macfarlane Natural History Museum on Macfarlane Terrace. The 1886 Museum Hall built by Macfarlane's Trustees is below on Henderson Street (formerly Macfarlane Street) facing a field now the Memorial Park.

**BOOK REVIEW**

**St Saviours at 150.** Published by the Vestry, 2006. £5. J. Malcolm Allan assisted by W.F.T. Anderson.

Most congregational histories are worthy, but exceedingly dull, strong on the architecture and the monuments, full of achievement and sanctity, mute on dispute and personality. But this, which covers the history of this Episcopal congregation in Bridge of Allan from its foundation in the 1850s to the present day, is a refreshing contrast, written in a very accessible, informative and impish style. What helps to flesh out the church's own records is the survival of personal correspondence to and from leading figures ['my Lord Bishop'– what an age is summed up in that title], shedding light on the realities of clerical life so often hushed up – the wife in the rectory having her breakdown while her broken down husband was under going treatment at Callander hydro. There were right from the start continuing problems of finance; as is wisely observed, a parish can survive with eccentric or slack clergy, but never without a good treasurer'!

Very welcome, and why this should be read by the wider community, is the ability of the author to set the church's history through the decades in its context, and in the early days that of a developing spa town at Bridge of Allan. It was visitors, either from Glasgow or England rather than locals, who provided the rationale for this new congregation – and tipped the scales to St Saviour's site: down below in the village rather than up at the Wells. Valuable light is shed on key figures in the early days of Bridge of Allan's development, Major Henderson and Lady Abercrombie, for example. As is made clear, the spa was to fade, and the coming of the university gave an impetus to change, as did also building in and around the area. Whether the congregation has taken full advantage of the new opportunities is a question which is raised, in the same spirit of honest appraisal that reveals the stresses on congregational life and in ministry in the later twentieth century.

Perhaps a little more concession might have been made to non Episcopalians, uninstructed as we are in the distinction between the Scotch order of worship and the Church of England's, which clearly did divide nineteenth century worshippers at Saviour's, or the force of ritual, but change is well charted through peace and war in hymnbooks, styles of worship and of ministry, and even times of services. Change is, of course, not always to everybody's liking – while it might be acceptable in 1916 to shift the evening service to 3pm for fear of a night Zeppelin raid, retiming 'mattins' in the early 1970s for perfectly good reasons caused great offence to some. But that is church life!

Available at Bridge of Allan Public Library and at the Smith, Stirling.

Alastair J Durie

**BOOK REVIEW**

**Rome's First Frontier: the Flavian Occupation of Northern Scotland.** D.J. Woolliscroft and B. Hoffman, 2006. Tempus. £19.99. 256pp. ISBN 0 7524 3044 0.

During the first century AD the Roman Empire continued its apparently inexorable expansion in spite of occasional setbacks, the most spectacular of which in AD 9 was the defeat in what is now Germany of three whole legions under Varus. Caesar's attempt to invade Britain in 55 BC was thwarted, but the emperor Claudius in AD 43 crossed the Channel and resumed the advance. In spite of the check of Boudicca's rebellion in 61, the occupation of what are now England and Wales followed, and Northern Britain seemed destined to be the next extension of the *Pax Romana.* Vespasian, the first of the Flavian dynasty of emperors, who had been commander of a legion in the invasion of Britain under Claudius, decided in about AD 77 to appoint Agricola as governor of the province with the presumed intention of completing its conquest. Agricola quickly subdued Wales, and then proceeded to North Britain, and by his third season reached the Tay.

Meantime the advance into Germany had stopped. It has long been believed that a defended frontier was built there soon after the defeat of Varus in the Teutoburger Wald, but it is now accepted that the *Limes* defences were not in fact constructed until the second century. The conquest of Scotland was supposed to be completed by the battle on Mons Graupius in 83 (or 84) AD, but the Highlands were never occupied by the Romans, although it is likely that there were some treaties or at least agreements with various tribes. Instead a frontier line of forts, fortlets, and signal towers was built, extending at least from a little south of Ardoch fort at Braco to Bertha near Perth. This line occupied the Gask Ridge north of Strathearn, and has been extensively studied, although new discoveries are still being made almost every year. It is now apparent that this was indeed the first frontier of the empire, earlier than the better known Hadrian's Wall (120s AD) or the Antonine Wall (mid 140s AD).

Much of the course of the Roman road along the ridge and many of the previously known sites are clearly visible on the ground, and can be visited. The most spectacular of these is the Ardoch fort at Braco, probably the best preserved Roman fort in Europe. The Roman road from Ardoch towards Bertha along the Gask ridge can be followed a good part of the way. Some of it lies under the modern road, and much more is still in use as farm tracks running arrow-straight and continuing the line of the modern road. Beside these tracks the sites of some of the signal towers have been cleared by Historic Scotland and are on display with information boards.

A great deal of information has been revealed in the 20th century by aerial photography. Woolliscroft and Hoffman are the Directors of the Roman Gask Project of the University of Liverpool. For a number of years they have been excavating new sites on and near the ridge, and re-examining by excavation or by modern geo-physical methods some of the older sites. They have carefully evaluated all previous work on the ridge no matter how eminent the excavator and have not hesitated to look again at the evidence and where necessary to draw fresh conclusions. Their book reviews the previous work on each site in detail, and brings our knowledge up to date. There are clear site plans, many reproduced from the original reports, and numerous other pictures, including aerial photographs. This book is an invaluable guide for any visit to any of the Roman sites north of the Forth. It does not cover the Antonine wall or any sites to the south, but there are other books for this.

There is, however, much more in this book than descriptions of archaeological work carried out so far in the area. Our understanding of the history of the conquest of North Britain by the Romans was that shortly after the victory of Mons Graupius the Romans withdrew and built Hadrian's Wall, and only made a limited return twenty years later to

the Antonine Wall. It has always seemed that the Romans achieved an enormous amount in the short time they were north of the walls. The accepted chronology has usually been based almost entirely on the *Agricola* of Tacitus. According to this eulogy of Agricola by his son-in-law the conquest of what is now Scotland was entirely the work of this outstanding general. In their work on the Gask ridge Woolliscroft and Hoffmann, particularly in their re-excavation of some of the older sites using more modern techniques, have shown that the occupation must have been longer than was previously estimated. In the light of this new evidence there are a number of questions that have to be answered. They have come to the conclusion that we must re-evaluate the *Agricola*; it should not be regarded as incontrovertible historic truth, but more as the rhetorical tribute to a relative who was an outstanding public hero, a tribute in which by custom it was legitimate to make exaggerated claims.

*Rome's First Frontier* is a masterpiece which opens a new chapter in the studies of Roman North Britain. It is at least a turning point, perhaps epoch making. In the past we have been over reliant on Tacitus – we had to be, in the absence of other evidence. Now we have new evidence from modern methods of archaeology, ably and clearly presented in this book. It is to be followed by a detailed re-appraisal of the *Agricola* in a forthcoming book by Birgitta Hoffmann, which should be equally valuable and interesting. In the meantime *Rome's First Frontier* is indispensable for any one at all interested in the 20th century archaeological work on Rome's North West Frontier in what is now Scotland, whether as a guide to an individual site, or as part of the history of the spread of the Roman Empire.

Ron Page