

XVIII.—REVIEWS.

CORBRIDGE ROMAN STATION (Corstopitum) Northumberland. Official Guide by ERIC BIRLEY, M.A., F.S.A. London, H.M. Stationery Office. 1935. Pp. 26, with 4 illustrations and a plan. 6d.

A brief review of this excellent guide has appeared in *Proceedings*⁴, vol. VII, no. 3, but its importance and general excellence deserve fuller notice. Until 1934, when work was resumed at Corbridge by the Durham University Excavation Committee in co-operation with H.M. Office of Works, the site had been closed to the public, since the Great War unhappily interrupted the earlier excavations. It is a matter for thankfulness that this unsatisfactory state of things has at last come to an end. An area including the central administrative buildings on either side of the Stanegate has been presented to the nation by Mr. David Cuthbert of Beaufront Castle, and is now in the care of the Office of Works. The new excavations have already resulted in the filling of some of the gaps in the structural history of the site.

Visitors to Corstopitum have, until the appearance of this handy guide, been at a disadvantage. The accounts of the earlier excavations are naturally technical and are distributed through ten volumes of *Archæologia Aeliana*, 3rd series, while the volume of the *Northumberland County History*, which contains Haverfield's summary, is too ponderous to be carried in the field. Mr. Birley's guide not only caters in convenient form for the casual visitor,

but is an authoritative summary of what is known of this interesting site, and as such will be welcomed by all students of Roman Britain.

It opens with a note on the name Corstopitum, for which the manuscripts of the *Itinerary* are our only evidence. Then follows a brief account of its situation where the main trunk road, laid out probably by Agricola, chooses the best of a limited number of practicable crossings of the Tyne at a point where there are firm foundations for a bridge. A valuable summary of the history of the site occupies six pages. The first phase of the occupation was certainly military, a character it retained, until the abandonment of Scotland by the sons of Severus rendered an advanced base no longer necessary. Thereafter, until the close of the Roman occupation, it was as a town that it grew and flourished. It is this change of character, together with the vicissitudes of its long occupation, that give the site its unique place among the towns of Britain. Readers should, however, be warned that several controversial questions are touched upon. In the tentative identification of *Praetorium* with Brough on the Humber we are entering the realm of pure guess-work. Both Whitby and Bridlington have claims to put forward. The date of the conclusion of the first occupation of Scotland Mr. Birley places "soon after A.D. 90," and adds "the exact date is not known, but it cannot have been very much later than A.D. 100." This is duly cautious, but it should be noted that, since this was written, Sir George Macdonald has stated (J.R.S., vol. xxv, pp. 187-200) that he is not prepared to accept the evidence, based on the comparative study of samian ware, recently put forward for this conclusion by Mr. Birley and Dr. Davies Pryce (J.R.S., vol. xxv, pp. 59-80). In dating the Vallum frontier as "perhaps about A.D. 110," Mr. Birley is on even more delicate ground, for excavations now in progress are directed to solving this very problem. Further work may well prove him to be right, but others who rightly

look to Mr. Birley as an authority may not be so careful as to preserve his qualifying "perhaps." Discussion of the evidence for such points as these is naturally out of place in a brief guide of this kind. It is greatly to the credit of Mr. Birley and those with him who have devoted themselves to the study of the Wall and its peculiar problems that there are now so few gaps left in its history.

About a third of the book is devoted to a lucid description and interpretation of the visible remains of the great granaries and the storehouse, "one of the largest and most imposing structures surviving . . . in the whole of Roman Britain," and their surrounding buildings. There follows a brief descriptive catalogue of some of the principal finds, now to be seen in the South Lodge of Beaufront Castle. It is good news to hear that the collection may eventually be housed in a special building upon the site. Much of the material from the earlier excavations has never been published, nor has it been available to the student. Our knowledge of pottery, brooches, tools, etc., has been greatly advanced as a result of scientific excavations since 1914, and we hope that Mr. Birley may find time before long to undertake the publication of the Corbridge material in a single volume.

The excellent illustrations deserve a word of commendation. A fine photograph of the west granary is new to us. The three other full-page photographs, the large slab set up in the governorship of Calpurnius Agricola, the Corbridge lion, and the mould of the god Taranis, have all appeared before in different volumes of *Archæologia Aeliana*, but comparison with their previous appearance is to the advantage of this guide in each case. They add greatly to the appeal of this excellent booklet.

PHILIP CORDER.

A GAZETTEER OF ROMAN REMAINS IN EAST YORKSHIRE.

By MARY KITSON-CLARK, M.A. Roman Malton and district, Report no. 5. Royal 8vo, pp. 1-142, 1 figure, 1 map in end-folder. Obtainable from the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 10 Park Place, Leeds. Price, one guinea.

The Roman Malton Committee was formed to explore the Roman fort at Malton, under the auspices of Dr. J. L. Kirk and Mr. Philip Corder, to whom this volume is dedicated. It soon wisely extended its scope, to include the adjacent countryside, and was rewarded by discovering potters' kilns at Crambeck, a pottery at Throlam, and a villa at Langton; demonstrating incidentally that careful field-work would still yield rich results in the area. The essential basis of such field-work is, however, a knowledge of available productive sites. In this matter the vast Ridings of Yorkshire have suffered from a neglect not shared by smaller neighbouring counties. A documented index of Roman remains was urgently needed, and is now supplied by Miss Kitson-Clark, a member of the committee and of this society.

The resultant work is no dry catalogue. Yet it may be considered upon this basis first, by comparing its map with the Ordnance Survey of the same area, where comparison is possible. We see (pp. 58-9) that seven villas have mounted to eleven; that the potteries are multiplied by at least five; that finds indicative of permanent settlement are twenty-seven as against sixteen, and we do not include single burials. Miss Kitson-Clark also lists coins and miscellaneous objects, the latter useful clues to new discoveries. The achievement is not a discredit to the Ordnance Survey (all know the limitations imposed by time and staffing upon the archaeological section of that department), but it reflects great credit upon Miss Kitson-Clark. Her multiplication of remains is not a flight of unguarded

enthusiasm, but is marked by careful documentation and a praiseworthy caution in dealing with obscurities.

It is a natural hope that the same hand will undertake parallel work for the west half of the county, where the need is equally urgent. Yet, apart from the committee's pre-occupation with the eastern half, there was much to be said for taking that district first. The Wolds are particularly susceptible of settlement: as Miss Kitson-Clark points out, they are "chalk-capped hills, dry, high, bare and rounded, the first home of primitive settlers in all ages." In contrast, the bare limestone of Blackmore and Cleveland does not invite agriculturalists; and although Bronze Age folk went there, as sheep-farmers do to-day, the land is still bare above the 600-foot contour. Thus, Roman history only reflects the fact that at all times the Wolds have been the vestibule of the north. That function was already displayed by the distribution of the Parisi and their Iron-Age kinsfolk, who settled on the Wolds and fared thence across Stainmore to Cumbria, Galloway and even Ulster. Later, when Dark-Age history tells its tale in great names rather than distributions, Eric Bloodaxe found Valhalla by the same route.

It is thus evident that these conditions operated so as to change the distribution of man very little between earlier Iron-Age and Roman times. One of the most interesting features of the map is its verification of the suggestion conveyed by the Ordnance Survey, that the villas occupied the lower slopes, below the life-giving water-springs. The water-supply must have fixed there also the best settlements of the Iron Age. On the summits, where villages might be expected to occur, there are plentiful scattered finds. Many of these are associated with mounds, which always yield Roman or even earlier objects (Duggleby and Crayke), and were often used for windmills (Fimber Mill Hill, Cowlam, Helperthorpe, Swinton, Wetwang Mill Hill), as Elgee rightly observes. Archæologically, it is thus required to extend our know-

ledge of the villa-distribution amid the corn-growing slopes: and to explain these mounds, of which the nature is quite obscure.

Hardly less interesting is the coastal district. Holderness was even then marshy, as the Ulrome pile-dwellings show. But the recent work by the Fen Research Committee suggests that it may have been less so in Roman times, or that active steps were taken in embanking and draining. In the latter respect, the engineer Crepy's remark (p. 120) as to early embanking near Patrington deserves investigation. In this area as a whole discoveries have, indeed, been less sought than forced upon the attention by modern draining and marine erosion. The recorded material, however, suggests a country-side studded with small villages, the counterpart of the northern rim of the Vale of Pickering. A contrast in the date of distributions here emerges. The only evidence for the development of the farm-system, or *Einzelhöfe*, before the second century, is the highly significant fact that the associated field-systems were in previous existence. The villages, on the other hand, were there before Roman times (e.g. Atwick, Costa, Thornton Dale, Ulrome, Easington, Burstwick, Leven Canal) and continued to exist during the period. Thus, the combined impression is of a prosperous country-side, peopled by small-holders independent of the urban unit, who gradually civilized themselves on a scale fitted to their environment. This view is confirmed by other considerations.

According to Ptolemy, the chief place of the Parisi was Petuaria, a Celtic name meaning "The Fourth"; presumably so called because there were at least three other centres like it, each belonging to a tribal division. If Petuaria was Brough, as its position seems to indicate, excavation has now revealed it to be a little township, an *oppidum* of the Alchester or Irchester style. At all events, there was in all this land no big town comparable with even the smaller cantonal capitals elsewhere: and it is

worth recalling that the Ravenna List makes no mention of such a centre. At first sight, this might suggest a backward area: but the finds do not suggest this, and there are analogies for another kind of explanation. In Gaul, the Allobroges at first and the Vocontii always, lived in villages. The former adopted town-life of their own free choice. The Vocontii retained their village-system, with two capitals, at Lucus and Vasio; for they were an allied territory (*civitas foederata*) and geography imposed upon them their system of life. For a different reason, geography has given the East Riding no inevitable meeting-place; a marked contrast with the neighbouring *civitates*, the *colonia* at York and the *civitas Brigantum* at Aldborough. It is, indeed, exceptional in Britain at large, where the cantonal system was widely imposed: so exceptional that the fact, indubitable in itself, is most easily explained by the assumption that the Parisi were *foederati*, tenacious of their own customs. Consonantly, *Derventio* in this district was held in the fourth century by a local militia, the *numerus supervenientium Petuereusium*, whose title both supports the claim of Petuaria to supremacy and emphasizes the individuality of the region. The position of the other centres must remain doubtful, though one may be put at Norton (p. 113), where large *canabae* had developed outside Malton, and another perhaps at Barmby-on-the-Moor (p. 63). Bridlington Bay (p. 69) has yielded a suggestive run of coins, from Hadrian to the late fourth century.

Apart from the *humanitas*, the *pars servitutis* which the Parisi acquired for themselves in accordance with their livelihood and pockets, what did the Roman government impose upon the district? Throughout the domination, the permanent post was undoubtedly Malton; until Hadrian's time the place was garrisoned; its third-century function is obscure; during the fourth century, if it was *Derventio*, it held the local militia. It was natural that the place should become a road-centre. On this side Miss

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Kitson-Clark has important points to record, notably the excavation of Braygate Street by Dr. Kirk (pp. 141-2), providing direct communication between Malton and York north of the Derwent. Names of the "street" class seem to attest a branch (p. 42) towards Hovingham and Aldborough, field-observation another towards Settrington. The line to southward requires substantiation, though certain beyond Millington. In other districts, the existence of Roman metalling on the age-old tracks towards Bridlington needs proof, while the reference to a causeway running eastwards north of Beverley also demands spadework.

Both the governmental and local interest in these roads must have been keen at the time when the coastal signal-stations were working. Miss Kitson-Clark does not add to the number of sites, though it must have cost much restraint to refrain from including Whitby. Boulby seems to have gone beyond recall. Further south, erosion has probably removed all clues to the system in use, though the cliff site near Aldborough coast-guard station is suggestive. Finally, it is clear that as long as the coastal signal-stations were working, the open country-side was safe, as is shown by the coins from villas at Langton, Hovingham and, most significantly, Harpham. There is no doubt that these peaceful agricultural communities were worth protecting. They were probably the more prosperous for having few political aspirations. Tactically, they formed the hinterland to the great centre of general administration at York, a point which may well have dictated a special treatment from the first. Miss Kitson-Clark's study makes it very clear that conditions were not unsettled. This is no community sheltering under the protection of forts, but a solid block of native territory, whose folk gauged their civilization according to their needs, becoming in the end a mainstay of Roman rule.

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