

REVIEWS.

- 1.—*An Antonine Fort, Golden Hill, Duntocher*, by Anne S. Robertson. 8vo., pp. i-xi, 1-134, pls. 1-8, figs. 1-23. Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1957. Price 15/-.

In many ways the Antonine Wall fort of Duntocher is one of the most surprising that have yet been revealed. No one really expected the little fortlet, uncannily like a milecastle, to which the fort, itself a small one, and, in due course, the Antonine Wall were tied. As Miss Robertson remarks (p. 92), the continued existence of the fortlet is hardly explicable unless it was in use "during the continuous occupation of the site". This prepares us for the almost contemporary discovery by aerial photography of comparable if somewhat larger features at Wilderness Plantation and Glasgow Bridge: and these, added to the long known but hitherto solitary structure at Watling Lodge, begin to form a class of patrol posts on the Antonine Wall like the milecastles of Hadrian's Wall though certainly not so rigidly spaced. To the student of Hadrian's barrier that will perhaps be the most interesting discovery which the book reveals; and, in view of the differing size of the Scottish fortlets, it will be well to recall that not only do the milecastles differ in size but their garrisons, to judge from barrack accommodation, differ quite markedly in strength.

The Duntocher fort also has something in comparison with Haltwhistle Burn fort, as Miss Robertson notes. Here it may be observed that since the fort in question can now be related to the first phase of planning on Hadrian's Wall, when forts lay detached behind it, the comparison becomes the more apt, since both are related to a continuous barrier.

It was indeed a curious piece of planning that led the builders of the Antonine Wall to include the fort at Duntocher rather than to seize the crest and leave it detached behind them, as they did at Bar Hill. Still more curious is the loop-line in the Wall ditch, by which they contrived, not very successfully, to have the best of both worlds. On Hadrian's Wall, the contrasting treatment of the two detached forts, at Carvoran and Castlesteads, may be compared with advantage. Finally, the internal buildings of Haltwhistle Burn, abnormal in size and plan, have obviously something in common with those of Duntocher, though much restricted opportunities of excavation did not permit Miss Robertson to recover more than one block like a small barrack, superseding a smaller square building. Both types are matched on the Northumberland site.

Severe post-Roman disturbance of the site, more extensive than mere stone robbing, disappointed Miss Robertson of her hopes of recovering stratified pottery; and it was particular ill luck that rendered her meagre yet welcome harvest of such pieces deficient in sherds of real significance. The more experienced the excavator, the larger sympathy for her plight will be forthcoming. Enough pottery was, however, recovered to demonstrate that the site was purely Antonine and had not superseded an Agricolan post. In default of significant material from the site which would help to solve the uncertainties attaching to the periods of occupation of the Wall, Miss Robertson has some highly interesting points to contribute from her skill in these matters upon the numismatic evidence (pp. 118-120), including the hoard from Briglands, Kinross-shire. It is surely significant that supplies of silver coins were available to a careful and systematic hoarder as late as 187; and it is only to be regretted that in the nature of the case we can never know whether the hoarding was brought to an end soon after that date by private calamity or public disaster.

To describe Duntocher as a "sow's ear" would be exaggerated, for Miss Robertson has made out of it a very

pretty purse. The University of Glasgow is to be congratulated upon its production and upon its continued interest in a site where its staff first began explorations in 1775: while to the generosity of the Carnegie Trust we owe a report remarkably cheap in these days of rising prices.

I. A. RICHMOND.

- 2.—*The Relics of Saint Cuthbert, Studies by Various Authors Collected and Edited with an Historical Introduction* by C. F. Battiscombe, printed for the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral at the University Press, Oxford, 1956, pp. xv and 561, with 58 plates (some in colour), numerous illustrations in the text and index. Price ten guineas.

Soon after Christmas of the year 686 Cuthbert was rowed out for the last time to his hermitage on Farne Island, the Inner Farne as it is now called, and there on 20 March 687, still a comparatively young man, but greatly weakened by the austerities of his life, he died. He had earlier given instructions that he was to be buried on the island near the oratory which he himself had built, but shortly before his death he reluctantly consented to the wish of the brethren that his body might be taken back for burial in the monastic church at Lindisfarne itself. Thus it came about that on the day of his death Cuthbert's body was buried in a stone coffin under the floor of the church on the south side of the altar. Eleven years later, in 698, the body of the saint, found miraculously free from all taint of corruption, was exhumed for the elevation of the relics and thereafter it was placed in a light wooden chest which was left exposed to view on the floor of the sanctuary.

No doubt the manner of Cuthbert's life as well as his own personal qualities were the most important factors in the establishment of a cult whose beginning was marked by the

elevation of the relics in 698 and to whose continuing influence to-day this volume is itself a witness. But more than this was needed to establish the saint in the commanding position which he came to hold and perhaps not least among these other factors was the sense of continuity which the congregation of Saint Cuthbert, by its vigilant guardianship of the relics, was able to establish from the great age of Bede across the darker centuries which intervened before the building of the great stone cathedral at Durham by William of St. Calais. The tale of that guardianship has been familiar since childhood to many of those born north of Humber—the ravaging of Lindisfarne, the abandonment of the island in 875, the long years of wandering over Northumbria, the sojourn at Chester-le-Street for a hundred years and finally the settlement at Durham. There the saint and his community prospered through the Middle Ages until the destruction of the shrine in the sixteenth century and the dispersal of all its treasures.

Save for the masterly essay by Bertram Colgrave on “Saint Cuthbert and His Times”, this great work, massive no less for its scholarship than for its physical bulk, is concerned with Cuthbert the saint rather than with Cuthbert the hermit and bishop. The relics which still survive and which are the tangible witness of the continuity of Saint Cuthbert’s congregation from the seventh century to the twelfth and beyond were found when the grave of the saint, situated below the level of the stone floor of the feretory in Durham cathedral, was opened on 17 May, 1827. The circumstances of that opening, as well as other episodes in the history of the relics, are the subject of a long study by C. F. Battiscombe, who has in addition carried a heavy burden of editorial responsibility. The relics themselves fall as a whole into three groups chronologically, those which were buried with Cuthbert at the time of his death in 687 or at his elevation in 698, those which were presented to the shrine by Æthelstan as he was journeying north to Scotland in 934 and those which may not have found their way into the coffin until the translation

of 1104. Among the earliest are of course the coffin reliquary itself, an antiquity of outstanding interest even in such a volume as this. Professor Kitzinger contributes a learned and exhaustive discussion of both its structure and its iconography. One wonders why he, by implication (like Dr. Pevsner explicitly in another context), seems so sure that the representation of the Adoration of the Magi in the church at Kirknewton is of an age so much later than both the coffin and the Franks Casket. Professor Bruce Dickins comments briefly on the inscriptions on the coffin and there are contributions by Bruce-Mitford on the pectoral cross, by Raleigh Radford on the portable altar and by Peter Lasko on the comb, each and all expertly done and of absorbing interest. Of a different kind but similar age is the copy of St. John's Gospel about which Professor Mynors and Roger Powell write, the one on the manuscript and the other on the binding. In a volume which contains no fewer than 58 plates, it may seem churlish to be dissatisfied, but if there is one thing missing from this great work it is a reproduction of a page or two of the incomparably beautiful uncial script in which this copy of the Gospel is written.

Some at least of the surviving fabric may be attributed to Cuthbert's own time and it is of particular interest to note on the "Nature Goddess" silk the occurrence of the vine-scroll motif which occupies so prominent a place in the decoration of the crosses at Bewcastle, Ruthwell and elsewhere. Outstanding among the fabrics are the stole and the maniple, unique examples of tenth century Anglo-Saxon embroidery, and probably Winchester work, which were presented to the shrine on the occasion of Æthelstan's visit to Chester-le-Street in 934. These and other pieces, some of them later in date and of east Mediterranean origin, are examined by experts with a minuteness of detail which can be justified by the rarity of such things among Anglo-Saxon antiquities. And even yet the tale is not complete for there are contributions on the Durham services in honour of Saint Cuthbert, on medieval polyphony at Durham, on the Ushaw

ring and on the technical methods employed in the preservation of the relics.

Presented with such a feast the reviewer can scarcely have room in his thoughts beyond admiration for the scale on which this great work was conceived, for the labour which has gone to the making of it, for the skill of the printer who produced it and for the generosity of the Friends of Durham Cathedral whose gifts made its production possible. Perhaps there will be some readers who will occasionally think that the weight of cold, scientific analysis seems to drive mere wayward humanity from its pages. Yet in the end this great book is worthy of its subject and we may lay it down knowing, to adapt slightly the words of one of its contributors, that it will ensure that the relics of Saint Cuthbert will long survive to kindle the imagination and renew the faith of all who look upon them.

PETER HUNTER BLAIR.

