

REVIEWS

Hadrian's Wall, by David J. Breeze and Brian Dobson, Allen Lane, 1976, xi + 345 pages, 29 plates and numerous figures. £5.95.

HADRIAN'S WALL is not only a subject near and dear to those who live within its shadow, it is the surviving symbol of what was undoubtedly the most ambitious, elaborate, spectacular and, mile for mile, expensive frontier of the Roman world. It is also probably the best studied. On the other hand, so important a subject is it that any well-written new book on it is of interest. When such is the first full-scale treatment of the whole subject to appear for many years, it is also of the greatest importance; and we are not disappointed in this case.

Drs. Breeze and Dobson are two scholars of the younger generation, trained and schooled in one of the strongholds of Roman northern frontier archaeology. They are, in addition, very well-suited to putting down what is the best of recent work and thought—excavation, fieldwork and interpretation—in a thoroughly stimulating way. The result is, unquestionably, a volume which contains much that will strike the interested layman, schoolteacher and amateur—and some midland and southern scholars too—as a spectacular departure from the older, accepted, text-book story. But it is right and proper that this is so. No archaeological subject can remain static for decades. When one is dealing with such fragmented and scattered evidence as the frontier-specialist is, it is indeed rash for anyone to believe that he can say the last word on a given subject. The spade is always waiting to turn up another mutilated fragment, which will alter the picture: the shovel is so often mightier than the pen.

In short, this book is thoroughly to be recommended—and not least amongst the reasons why, is because it has asked again so many questions which in recent years have been considered answered.

C. M. DANIELS

Early Celtic Art in North Britain, by M. MacGregor, Leicester University Press, 1976 (2-volume set). £25.00.

This work is based on a Ph.D. thesis of 1965, totally revised in 1973. The latter is hard to believe. Concessions made to Late Bronze—early Iron Age continuity (12–13) take no account of any implications of the latest Bronze Age metal-working traditions for the objects of the Iron Age, most of which are made of bronze. The Iron Age is discussed in developed A–B–C terminology (what *is* a Belgic-shy,

Second "B" family?—p. 16), its economy is presented in the "foot-loose Celtic cowboy" image, whilst under Roman rule the natives are resentful and quick to rebel—Jobey's evidence of peacefully developing settled farming communities is not even discussed.

A large proportion of the metalwork described falls within the Roman period, but despite apologising for lacunae in her understanding of the period (p. 177), the author creates the framework for her interpretations from historical judgements based on outdated ideas of northern military affairs and tribal diplomacy. Her "insurrection hypothesis" view of barbarians sweeping to York in 197 is as dangerous as any earlier "invasion hypothesis". What of the peaceful third century, and then the fourth in which Lowlanders were threatened by Picts and Irish as much as any "Romans" south of the Wall? The study stops enigmatically in "A.D. 250+".

Post-Roman hanging-bowls might have provided a timely warning about the use in these volumes of the kind of art-historical analysis pioneered by Fox, with its regional schools and contacts based on distribution maps. For in the case of the mainly pre-Roman three-link bits and their Roman derivatives (24–30) does not the distribution of the latter (52, map 1) represent the areas of Roman military activity in the late first century more than "the complex political machinations which must have accompanied the spread of Roman rule in a reluctant Britain"? The author argues against the army itself being the agent of distribution, basing much on the non-military Middlebie hoard (27–8; 180). But there *is* a Flavian phase at nearby Birrens fort—and it was known well before 1973. Furthermore, a single radio-carbon date of *c.* 500 B.C. does not make the finding of the Birrenswark three-link derivative bit on or near a hill fort fortuitous, let alone throw doubt upon the nature and date of the site's Roman siege works (28).

The 355 items contained in volume 2 have been compiled selectively, excluding some well-published material and a variety of small items of personal adornment and others "unworthy of inclusion amongst decorative metalwork". Although these are discussed in volume 1, remarks about the "incomplete state" of the torc-list (93) leave the reader in some doubt about the remainder.

A separately bound catalogue may be convenient for use but is hardly justified by the price. As each object is given at least one individual page, nearly a third of the second volume consists of blank paper. A larger format, tabulated catalogue entries, and economically arranged figures could have reduced the work to a single volume. The recent revolution in cheap thesis publication will, it may be hoped, cause Leicester University Press to employ a parsimonious editor, with lower expectations of the purchasing power of the libraries of universities and local societies—not to mention individuals.

In conclusion, the work does emphasize that Celtic Art is not only the Battersea Shield, but that hundreds of small objects bear the distinctive stamp of the Celtic (? artist)-craftsman. The art-historical discussion is simplified by a useful visual and verbal glossary (xvii–xix), full of such verbal delights as "sinuous swash-Ns" and "plump-muzzles".

KEVIN GREENE

The Archaeological Study of Churches, edited by P. Addyman and R. Morris, vii + 79 pages, 13 plates, 20 figures. The Council for British Archaeology (Research Report no. 13), London, 1976.

Despite the fact that the Church of England owns the largest group of historic buildings in the country they were deliberately excluded from the provisions of the 1913 Ancient Monuments Act which forms the basis of our modern protective legislation. Undoubtedly this exclusion reflected the feeling that churches were not like other buildings but one of the unfortunate results of distinguishing them in this way was to divert archaeological attention away from them. For almost half a century churches suffered an archaeological eclipse. Only within the last decade have we seen a growing recognition that these are sites of great archaeological potential. The reasoning now seems obvious: in several senses the church has always been at the centre of the community, and its fabric, its foundations and its graveyard can provide a sensitive indicator of changes in the prosperity, organisation, health and belief of the area it served. But, just as we are now more aware of these possibilities, so we have become much more conscious of the threats posed to church archaeology by the pace of redundancy and the changes demanded by modern congregations.

This book therefore emerges at a critical time for ecclesiastical archaeology. Here its practitioners describe the techniques which they have evolved and the special problems which are encountered in the study and excavation of churches. We are shown the sources of documentary evidence and introduced to the unfamiliar world of church legislation in this country and abroad. Among these essays five will perhaps be of particular interest to readers of *Archaeologia Aeliana*. Dr. Taylor and Mr. Biddle contribute two far-reaching surveys of the methodology and of some of the basic research areas which will need attention; these articles will constantly be used by future students. The three other papers are all concerned with northern churches. Mr. Hurst's account of his work at Wharrah Percy in Yorkshire shows how a complex history can lie within the most insignificant of churches whilst Mr. Phillips' description of the photographic and other recording techniques used under York Minster whets one's appetite for the final report on those heroic excavations. Nearer to home Professor Cramp's report on her rescue excavation within Jarrow Church offers a salutary example of one of the book's themes: even the archaeology of a building of European importance could have been lost for ever if it had not been for the vigilance and energies of a few individuals.

This is a book, then, for all who are interested in churches but its message is for congregations and church councils as much as it is for antiquaries and archaeologists.

RICHARD N. BAILEY

BOOKS RECEIVED

W. H. Manning: *Catalogue of Romano-British Ironwork in the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne*, The University of Newcastle upon Tyne £2.75

One of the most welcome contributions Museums can make to assist scholars is to publish such excellent catalogues as this, and it is devoutly to be wished that the Newcastle Museum will go on to produce many more covering other sections of the collections.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF YORK

Volume 3: THE LEGIONARY FORTRESS

Fascicule 1. *The Church Street Sewer and an Adjacent Building* by J. B. Whitwell (55 pp.) £2.60

Volume 14: THE PAST ENVIRONMENT OF YORK

Fascicule 1. *The Environmental Evidence from the Church Street Roman Sewer* by P. C. Buckland (44 pp.) £2.00

Volume 17: THE SMALL FINDS

Fascicule 1. *Finds from a Roman Sewer System and an Adjacent Building in Church Street* by A. MacGregor (30 pp.) £1.35

EXCAVATIONS IN YORK

Excavations in York 1973-74 Second Interim Report by P. V. Addyman (32 pp.) £2.00

There are so many opportunities for excavation in York at present that the York Archaeological Trust has been able to plan a coherent programme of research. The Trust proposes to make the basic data resulting from their excavations available in print as swiftly as possible. They plan therefore to produce eighteen volumes. The parts of these volumes will be published as each is ready for the press. Three of these parts, together with a *Second Interim Report*, are now available and promise well for the rest. Parts may be obtained from Council for British Archaeology, 7 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5HA. The prices given above are post free.