

REVIEWS

Nick Higham, *The Northern Counties to A.D. 1000*, Longmans, London, 1986, xv+392 pages, incl. 42 figs. and 34 pls. £12.50 paper, £22.50 cased.

This is an early volume in a projected series of twenty-one volumes designed to outline the history of England's regions. Two volumes will be devoted to each region with the chronological division in most cases falling at the end of the first millennium A.D. Members of the Society should welcome this volume in particular, as it covers a geographical area in which the Society first professed a special interest at its foundation in 1813. Moreover, members should take heart and surely some pride in the fact that the publications of the Society, together with those of more youthful neighbouring societies, loom large in a bibliography of almost a thousand items.

By the very nature of the period covered the account depends largely but by no means entirely on the interpretation of archaeological evidence. It is claimed and to a large extent the volume succeeds in presenting a picture of local communities adapting to "changing environmental conditions and changing technological and social possibilities", rather than presenting "the usual framework of successive human cultures". On the other hand, the familiar framework shows through—and why not—in chapters devoted to *Food Producing Economies 4000–2000 b.c.*, *Metal Users 200–0 b.c.*, *Invasion and Response*, *The Roman Interlude*, and so on.

There has been great determination to leave no stone unmentioned or unturned, and, on occasions, the general reader could find the pathway a challenge. But there is a liberal supply of clear, line illustrations and distribution maps to help to define the way,

even if some of the latter have very strict limitations of which the reader should be aware. For example, the hillforts plotted in Fig. 3.7 constitute no more than a distribution of univallate and multivallate settlements in hill country, and by no means do they give an indication of the overall settlement potential at that time.

There has been a need for such a history of the region, with forays across some less meaningful, modern, administrative boundaries. This volume fills the gap most worthily and we must look forward to the companion volume to be written jointly by Richard Thompson and the President of our Society, Norman McCord.

G. JOBEY

Angus J. L. Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria*, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1987, 178 pp., 39 figures. £20.

This book is a great treat for geographers, historians and lovers of northern landscapes. With a fine balance of general comment and detailed observation, and with a fascinating set of maps, Dr. Winchester has written a study that can hardly fail to please as well as instruct. A large part of his information is derived from manuscript sources in Cumbria and in London and is published here for the first time. But there is nothing raw about this research. The author analyses complex issues with rare economy, so that the main geographical and social structures he observes are clearly communicated to the reader, and the chronology of change is deftly described.

After introducing the region and its characteristics, Dr. Winchester divides his main areas of discussion between six sections (chapters 2–7). Under the heading

"Lordship and Territory" he quickly makes sense of the complex pattern of Cumbrian boundaries (wards, townships, baronies, manors, deaneries and parishes) relating them closely to the known history of lordship and settlement. The chapter titled "Village and Farmstead" gives a chronology of settlement history between 1100 and 1550. A period of widespread colonization between 1100 and 1300 was followed by disruption and reconstruction between 1300 and 1450. Then the years 1450-1550 were characterized by recovery and the renewed clearance of wastelands. "Farms and Fields" discusses the variety of farm types and field systems of Cumbria, making a major distinction between forest and lowland communities. This chapter contains important observations on bovates in Cumbria and on the characteristics of infield-outfield agriculture there. The chapter on "Moorland and Fell" examines the ownership and management of wastelands documenting the development of manorial rights over them. The chapter contains an important discussion of transhumance and the use of summer shielings. The last two main sections open up the portrait of the Cumbrian economy to examine non-agricultural occupations and local trade. "Woodland and Water" demonstrates the importance of the forests and rivers as economic resources. "Rural Industry and Market Towns" discusses the medieval development of the cloth industry and mining, and shows how the growth of market towns illustrates a pattern of increasing economic and social diversity in the course of the period.

There is no lack of close observation in any part of the book, and an appendix contains detailed case studies of six townships. However, it is through holistic rather than through reductionist perspectives that Dr. Winchester's book makes its biggest impact. He describes large patterns, both geographical and chronological, without straining the reader's credulity in so doing. His discussion of ancient boundaries,

for example, is a model of constructive perceptivity, with no argument pushed beyond the bounds of discretion. The work is for this reason a major event in the landscape history of the northern counties of England. The systematic nature of the enquiry, and the author's willingness to make controlled generalizations, enable him to invite the reader to compare Cumbria with other parts of northern England and to compare the North as a whole with other parts of England. Many of the features of organization described here have analogies on the opposite side of the Pennines and, taken all together, were characteristics of the North. Dr. Winchester himself suggests most of the relevant points for comparison. Cumbrian lordship, like that of Northumbria, retained some features of large multiple estates dating from before the Norman Conquest, and cornage was due from many tenants in the lowlands. Cumbrian parishes, like those of the North-East were characteristically large, containing numerous distinct townships. The expansion of settlement in Cumbria during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries gave rise to new villages with regular plans comparable to those of Durham. Cumbria, like Northumbria, was a land of bovates and husbandlands in the lowlands, and of forests, vaccaries and shielings in the hills. Mining was a distinctive source of non-agricultural income on both sides of the Pennines. Town life was very little developed anywhere north of York before the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These observations suggest the possibility of a typology of northern English landscapes, to be compared both with the rather similar ones of southern Scotland and with the rather dissimilar ones of southern England.

Meanwhile his succinct analysis of the chronology of agrarian change in medieval Cumbria shows that in this respect, too, there are close parallels between the north-west and other northern regions. Cumbria suffered a major upheaval in the late eleventh century at the hands of the Nor-

man nobility, but experienced exceptionally rapid colonization during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Dr. Winchester's comments reinforce the view that "the wave of colonization between c. 1150 and c. 1300 was of particular significance in the North because of the vast amount of empty land the province contained" (p. 6). Then, like parts of Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire, northern Cumbria in particular suffered cruelly from Scottish invasions in the earlier fourteenth century, so that the agrarian economy was unambiguously contracted before the Black Death. It remained contracted for at least a century after these catastrophes. But then southern Cumbria conforms to an apparently more general northern pattern in the strength of its agrarian recovery during the later fifteenth century. This study complements well the work of others who have attempted to delineate the contours of northern agrarian development and should encourage those who are currently engaged in the task.

It is a pretty safe prediction that one welcome feature of British agrarian history during the next twenty years will be the better integration of northern England into the general picture. This development has been pioneered in the work of Dr. Miller and Dr. Kershaw, and already one can see older perspectives beginning to shift. With a work of this quality available, and one hopes more to follow, further progress in this direction is irresistible.

R. H. BRITNELL

Robert Young, *Lithics and Subsistence in North-Eastern England*, B.A.R. 161. £22.

This volume represents the publication of a substantial part of Robert Young's doctoral thesis and we are indebted to him for bringing together and synthesizing a large amount of otherwise unpublished data from a hitherto poorly studied area. A subtitle makes it clear that the volume is not concerned with North-Eastern England as a whole but with the Wear Valley and with

settlement during the Stone and Bronze Ages.

The volume, which is over 400 pages long, is divided into two parts of which by far the larger is an inventory of sites at which stone tools have been found. This occupies 179 pages and is preceded by 115 pages of text of which 24 are tables. The volume contains an extensive bibliography and about 100 pages of illustrations. The general reader may find £22 a lot to pay for less than a hundred pages of text. As is the practice with volumes in this series, but to be regretted nonetheless, there is no index and the binding makes the volume difficult to use.

Most readers will be mainly interested in the first part of this volume. After a brief introduction Chapter One considers some of the limitations of the evidence, paying particular attention to the biases that arise from the incomplete nature of field work. In Chapter Two a consideration of the environment provides a context for the archaeological data while earlier work is appraised in Chapter Three.

The fourth and fifth chapters are the core of the work. Chapter Four provides an analysis of stone tools known from the area. This is conventional and makes use of well known schemes of classification, though Dr. Young has sensibly sought to simplify these where possible. His consideration of material usually regarded as "waste" is innovative and welcome, as are his views on "mixed assemblages". The small size of most assemblages precludes the extensive use of statistics though some attempt could have been made to go beyond the thirty-three pages of histograms and scatter diagrams which are such a feature of the latter part of the volume.

In Chapter Five Dr. Young offers a reconstruction of past patterns of land use. This follows a familiar form. Firstly, an assessment is made of the subsistence potential of the area during the Stone and Bronze Ages. We are given potted biographies of prey species from red deer to shell fish and an evaluation of plant resources. Secondly,

observations of contemporary hunter-gatherers are used to suggest the kind of subsistence strategies that may have been followed in the Wear Valley. This works well and produces a convincing picture. The trouble begins when an attempt is made to test this model against the archaeological data. To begin with, although the inventory lists a formidable quantity of stone artifacts, when viewed as representing six thousand years of human activity the evidence can be seen to be meagre. Dr. Young was able to list sixty-three microliths but these need represent no more than ten projectile points. A slender basis on which to describe over two hundred generations of hunting. But the greatest problem is that we do not really know what these stone tool assemblages mean. It is simplistic to interpret site function on the basis of a few so called "essential tools". We have very little real idea of how such "tools" functioned, and I do not share Dr. Young's faith that microwear studies will provide the answers. The fact of the matter is that we have a few items that were lost in the course of use and a large number that were thrown away. Stone tool assemblages are the material consequences of decisions taken in the past about rubbish disposal and it is by no means clear how attitudes to rubbish disposal reflect subsistence strategies.

Further field work will lead to the discovery of more sites but what is really needed is a better perception of what these sites mean in terms of past behaviour and the processes that lie behind their formation. Such an appreciation may lead towards a better understanding of past subsistence strategies. The archaeological record as at present constituted does not provide an adequate basis for such an understanding.

CHRISTOPHER SMITH

Charles Parish: *The Literary and Philological Society of Newcastle upon Tyne, The building and development of its Library,*

1793–1986. Octavo, 19 pages. Newcastle, 1987.

When two people have grown up together, there is between them a link, a degree of common understanding, which the years may weaken, but rarely wholly dissolve. So may it be with societies. In our own case this long association has existed with the Newcastle Literary and Philological Society. From the start there was, as there is still, a considerable overlap of membership. Those holding office in one society have often been found to be active in the other. For some years our Society occupied a room in the Lit & Phil building and, when the Newcastle Museum, a joint venture of the two Societies with the Natural History Society, occupied a new building behind the Lit & Phil, we took over the ground floor with our museum material. Some valuable objects, notably an Afro-Portuguese vessel and the Sebroke and so-called Allan croziers, formerly the property of the Lit & Phil, were left in our possession when at the mid-century (1849) we removed to the Keep our part of the Newcastle Museum.

The present pamphlet however is not concerned to tell the story of the Lit & Phil as an institution, that, at least for its first century, was done by Robert Spence Watson. It is concerned with the Library only, itself an afterthought in the foundation of the Society, but now its lasting glory.

At a modest price the pamphlet makes available in print the text of two lectures in which Mr. Parish traced the beginning, the development and the improbable survival into a very different world of this subscription library, so near unique an institution that outside London it is difficult to find a parallel. A mountaineer, asked why he climbed mountains, evaded the question with benign simplicity, "Because they are there". Why does the Lit & Phil survive? Because Green's gracious building is there, with 140,000 volumes on the shelves, and they hold a thousand members hostage.

It is almost a century since Spence Wat-

son wrote his *History of the Lit & Phil Society* and it was timely for Charles Parish to mark his approaching retirement with this history of the Library, an account which will be of continuing interest to all concerned with the history of Newcastle as a centre of enterprise and enquiry.

JOHN PHILIPSON

L. Allason-Jones, and B. McKay, *Coventina's Well: a shrine on Hadrian's Wall*, Chesham, The Trustees of the Clayton Collection, 1985. xiv, 112 pp., illus.

The discovery of Coventina's Well in 1876 brought to light one of the largest votive deposits ever recorded from a religious context in Britain. In the nature of such discoveries the contemporary accounts leave a very great deal to be desired in terms of precise information of the relative location of objects and of their exact description. In the century since the discovery a number of objects have been lost or, in the case of the coins, given as gifts by John Clayton the excavator and site owner, to his friends. An unknown number of coins were melted down to produce the raw material for the casting of a "Roman" eagle as a gift for Collingwood Bruce. This item, still extant in the Laing Art Gallery, weighs 6.3 kilos or the equivalent of about 250 second century *sestertii*. Even during the excavation the deposit suffered depredations at the hands of visitors among whom the most destructive was the gang of local miners who held the site by *force majeure* for a whole day whilst they pillaged at will.

The occasion of the present report is a study of the surviving coinage by McKay. To this catalogue and discussion is added a full account of the discovery itself from contemporary accounts, a survey of scholarly opinion on the significance of the find, an essay on the origins and extent of the cult of Coventina and a full, illustrated catalogue of the contents of the Well as they now exist or are traceable. The numismatic contents are, on the whole, well

known from the publication of the epigraphic items in *Roman Inscriptions in Britain* but a surprising number of less familiar objects are now fully described, including brooches, fibulae, belt buckles, figurines and anthropomorphic mounts. The nymph also attracted the deposition of a number of shoes and a Bronze Age stone axe-hammer. The latter object should not excite the bewildered comment which it receives here, since, as Ralph Merrifield has shown, stone axes were cherished as a powerful charm against a building being struck by lightning, being identified with thunderbolts. Presumably the rationale of this belief was that since the thunderbolt had reached earth once the statistical chances of another landing on the place where it was housed were negligible.

The problems pertaining to the Well deposits are not confined to their survival only but also encompass the very fact of them being deposited at all. It is perfectly reasonable to regard a mass of coins as being a true votive deposit and the same tolerance can be extended to portable objects such as bronze figures and fibulae but how did a mass of altars end up in the Well? This problem exercised the excavators and has excited much comment over the past century. Indeed one of the most charming sections of the present work is that in which a century of scholarly discussion of the problem is given in resumé. Whilst each and every solution is, or was, feasible the accumulating discord of academic voices begins to sound like the discussion of the inscription which set the Pickwick club off on their adventures. On the whole the presence of the altars and two inscribed incense burners in the waters of the Well are best seen as an act, or acts, of desecration rather than the result of an individual act of foreign violence. A good case is advanced for this having taken place as a result of the imperial ordinances of the late fourth century which resulted in the destruction of so many pagan religious sites.

The innovation of this volume is the pre-

sensation of the coins from the Well for the first time catalogued to modern numismatic references. At the time of the find Charles Roach Smith catalogued 13,490 coins, of these the present writer has traced 8,362 and a number of others which can be catalogued from contemporary descriptions although the coins themselves either no longer survive, vide Bruce's eagle, or have been dispersed. Among the latter must be counted the few precious metal items, four gold and 184 silver coins, sold in the dispersal of the Clayton estate and now no longer traceable. In presenting this material McKay has rendered a great service both to regional studies and to numismatics in general, most of the Well coins are in very poor condition and the undertaking represents an enormous effort of devotion to research. This said it is with regret that the reviewer turns to the discussion of the coins. Here the author perpetrates a serious methodological error.

As is normal these days the author studies the coins in "periods" which correspond to individual reign lengths or to years, spanning more than one reign or being less than a whole reign, during which a specific coin type or denomination was in regular monetary circulation. In order to make inter-site comparison possible the coins of a period are expressed as a component part of a notional 1000 coins using the formula:

$$\frac{\text{period total}}{\text{length of period}} \times \frac{1000}{\text{total for site}}$$

Applying this formula comparisons can be made between sites with varying totals of coin finds and histograms drawn from these data give a pretty uniform pattern of coin deposits in Britain. In the present study McKay finds that the pattern of coins for the second century is much stronger than is normal. There are extremely high counts of the issues from Trajan to Commodus. He is reinforced in this view by an inter-site comparison. The sites chosen, from which the coins for each period are averaged to give a

composite figure, are forts, civil settlements, villas and small towns in the north of England and in Wales. Of the latter it should be said that the coin list for Caerhun is very suspect indeed and that for Caernarvon does not include the most recent excavated material which shows that there was a coin hiatus in the Antonine period connected with a reduction of the garrison to a mere holding unit. Observing the discrepancy between the site average and the Well deposit McKay concludes that the Well includes a second century hoard, apparently ignoring the fact that the Well deposit is itself a hoard of special type, a *stips* or cumulative religious deposit. He, therefore, divided the contents of the Well into "site finds", itself a misnomer in this context, and "hoard". Much ingenuity is expended on defining the contents of the "hoard" and a series of clever calculations are presented based, again, on the contents of the site comparison average as regards denominational proportions. All is in vain for this is the mathematics of perpetual motion, elegant but in the end based on a fallacy. Coventina's Well is nothing like the sites chosen for comparison. They indeed produce true site finds; coins lost, or discarded, over a period which were subject to the vicissitudes of a circulating currency. They are truly random losses. The coins in the Well are not random losses, they are deposited by choice, and to judge by the condition of the second century coinage not before the third century. The Well shows the real availability of second century coin in the currency pool of the second and first half of the third century not the deposit of 11,413 coins into the Well, or some 170 kilos of metal, as a single act of devotion in the later second century.

That the coinage immobilized in religious contexts is unlike that in genuine site finds, as defined above, can be demonstrated from the third century coins in the Well which include issues almost unknown in random site loss contexts of Pupienus, Gordian III, Otacillia Severa, Tacitus, Florian and Probus. To an extent these inclusions may be due

to the very large number of coins in the Well as a whole but their survival in the general currency pool of their day is much less than the numbers in the Well would indicate, due to their withdrawal for political or economic reasons shortly after their issue. Also present, in some strength, are coins of the first quarter of the fourth century, issues which are scarce as site finds owing to the attrition suffered by this coinage in the revaluations characteristic of the monetary regime of Constantine's early years.

The steady devotion of the garrison of the fort at Carrawburgh, and of visitors, to Coventina is shown by the deposition of coins through to the very end of the fourth century. Coinage of the Valentinianic period, which is normally strongly represented on civil sites of the period, is relatively scarce in the Well but we should not draw the easy conclusion that this indicates a diminution of devotion or even a diminution in garrison strength of the adjacent fort. This may be the case but, as with all archaeological evidence, alternative explanation may be offered. The effects of the changes in military pay structure in the fourth century should not be overlooked. With actual coin payments reduced to about a third of their third century values and an enhanced payment in goods and services, fourth century soldiers were well provided for but not in terms of expendable cash. This must reflect on the ability of the devotees of the cult to deposit coins in the Well.

Clearly the publication of an accurate record of the Well and its contents must represent an important stage in the establishment of a proper corpus of the finds from Hadrian's Wall. There has been a deplorable lack of enthusiasm for presenting the rich body of finds from the area in the past which is reflected in the difficulty the present authors have experienced in bringing together the Coventina's Well finds. The lesson must be that, following the lead given so well by Allason-Jones and McKay, publication of collections from Wall museum

collections should become an urgent regional priority. The present work opens up important new aspects of scholarly research which need to be investigated in the light of comparable material from the military area. We must hope that there are young scholars who are willing to take up the challenge presented by the present publication.

P. J. CASEY
University of Durham

W. S. Hanson, *Agricola and the Conquest of the North*, B. T. Batsford, 1987, 210 pp., incl. 28 figs, 23 pls. £17.95.

For centuries Tacitus' life of Julius Agricola was the only source for his, apparently spectacular, governorship of Britain. The source, however, is fraught with problems. As the life of a distinguished marshal, ex-consul and Tacitus' father-in-law, it was by its very nature a eulogy, no more intended to be a piece of clinically impartial assessment than any work of ancient history, for Tacitus aimed to praise Agricola, not to bury him. But as the earliest work of a would-be literary stylist, it relied for effect on the deliberate use of words and clichés well-tried in older works, with culminating strokes of epigram. In such circumstances, to dissect its every sentence for historical truth is at best perilous and at worst outright pointless.

As archaeological excavation and discovery have increased our knowledge, the factually bare outline of the text has become a little better clothed, *vide* Furneaux's and Anderson's English editions and MacDonald's and Richmond's 1919 and 1944 *Journal of Roman Studies* papers. But Richmond, to some, appeared nearly as eulogistic as Tacitus himself and others were more sceptical, witness Eric Birley's 1946 discussion of Agricola and his predecessors. Then, in 1953, Burn's eminently well written and readable full-length study *Agricola and Roman Britain* was published, followed in 1967 by the new Ogilvie and Richmond text and commentary. Such, however, is the interest

in the subject, its importance, and the continued outpouring of scholarship and research, that in 1980 the Scottish Archaeological Forum dedicated a whole meeting to Agricola and in 1987 this new, 200-page study by Dr. W. S. Hanson arrived. Time will no doubt add new discoveries and, we hope, perhaps even shed further light on what is still an unclear episode in British history, although it is one which saw Roman arms—*virtus exercitus et Romani nominis gloria* as Tacitus put it—reach their farthest extent in the island. Certainly, we will presently need further assessments of this man who (in Cicero's old Republican words of traditional praise) *finis imperii propagavit*.

Dr. Hanson's text is well written and carefully prepared, with a minimum of slips (forts for *fora* in fig. 9 and 14.8 miles (9.2 km), p. 215, being two of the few). The bibliography is full and, along with a detailed reference system, of the greatest use to any professional or amateur who wishes to pursue individual points. The plates are perhaps less successful than the figures, which are almost all well composed and carefully prepared (3, 19 and 25 being the exception). A fault which is hardly the author's is the publisher's decision to split the maps across two pages with the resultant nipping of 8, 10, 15, 18, 21, 22 (and plate 7), or their misalignment, in the binding.

Dr. Hanson takes the subject chronologically. Chapter One deals with the sources of evidence, setting Tacitus' life of Agricola in its context and evaluating it. "It is not the intention here to try to discredit Tacitus totally as a source of information", we are glad to be told. Epigraphic and archaeological evidence is also presented. Chapter Two covers Agricola's early years, stressing the advantages obtained by his early espousal of the Flavian cause, and discussing the possible date of his consulship (76 or 77) and the battle of Mons Graupius (84 or 83). The next two chapters deal with Agricola's first two seasons in Britain (the earlier dating, 77 and 78, being preferred), and we sample the real flavour of the *oeuvre*, for Dr. Hanson

demands accuracy from Tacitus' every statement and has clearly set out to cut this very paragon of a Roman Major-General down to the size of a very penny-plain civil servant and provincial hack. So, success in Wales is argued rather to have been either the work of Frontinus or Tacitean hyperbole, while the conquest of Brigantia was definitely the achievement of Cerialis, perhaps with a little help from Frontinus. Likewise, the account of what the good governor did to foster romanization in the newly emerging *civitates* of the province appears to be no more than a bubble, easily pricked; for every governor practised it.

The fifth chapter takes us from the Tyne to the Forth, and the sixth covers Agricola's conquest of the Caledonians. Here the gentle reader might expect there to be less to criticize, not realizing that whole minefields of scholarly differences of opinion are already well sown across the path. To be fair, the crux is the desire to date individual sites within a year or two, and so tie them to a specific season's activity, on evidence which is generally not capable of such precision, and probably never will be. A selection of points: the fifth season of campaigning starts with Agricola leading a crossing of some estuary. Spurning the Clyde or Solway Hanson restates his earlier preference for his sailing out from Chester. Here one wishes that more had been made of Reed's sensible suggestion that the season started on the lower Clyde and ended with the army drawn up in Galloway, facing Ireland. Concerning possible Agricolan sites on the line of the later Antonine Wall, Hanson sensibly prefers a minimal view, while not totally omitting the possibility of Cadder, Castle-gary and Mumrills. It is perhaps a pity that north of the isthmus the reviewer's 1970 suggestion is omitted and Dr. Gordon Maxwell's argument for a salient consisting of Malling, Bochastle and Doune dismissed as special pleading for a little later it is admitted that forts might have existed there. More acceptable is the author's view of the marching camps which run in several series

up the north-east coast as far as the Spey. The largest of these must surely fit the later, Severan, campaigns better than Agricola's, in spite of Professor St. Joseph's dramatic change of opinion a few years ago. The site of Mons Graupius, that old problem, is also sensibly handled, for it must surely have lain in Moray, Nairn or even Inverness.

Chapter Seven covers "The Anatomy of Withdrawal". Here the Highland *limes* from Barochan to Stracathro is discussed, and the withdrawal from it, probably in 87, after one, or two, disastrous Roman defeats on the Danube. Here, also, the Gask ridge posts are placed, as a new frontier line, although the withdrawal from so many forts further north, including the legionary base of Inchtuthil, with the burial of nearly a million nails and the smashing of unused glass and pottery vessels into the gutters there, and into the ditch ends at Cardean, smacks far more of the massive dumping of quartermaster's stores which only accompanies a major withdrawal, and not a mere 10-mile pull-back. This withdrawal eventually brought the frontier back to the

Stanegate line, ironically enough, it appears, under the expansionist Emperor Trajan, who also needed troops for further Danubian Wars. A peripheral province, Britain's unimportance in the face of Central European warfare is clearly demonstrated.

The final section (Assessment and Reassessment) returns to the main task of correcting Tacitus and whittling down Agricola. Whether this (and, indeed, the whole book) succeeds is a matter of choice for the individual reader to make. There is, certainly, much work in the book and it contains interesting discussions, for which we are grateful, but to this reviewer in the final assessment what was obviously intended to be a magisterial put down of Agricola badly backfires. If Tacitus' hyperbole shows unacceptable bias Dr. Hanson's carping criticism shows hardly less bias, this time at the subject's expense. We still lack an up to date, impartial assessment of Agricola's life and work.

CHARLES DANIELS

