

### XIII

## BOOK REVIEWS, 2003

*Reviews in the Journal are published as the views of the persons who write them and are accepted by the Journal in all good faith as accurate and honest expressions of opinion.*

S. Beckensall, *British Prehistoric Rock Art*, 2nd ed. (Tempus, Stroud, 2002), pp. 160; many ills. ISBN 0 7524 7514 5. Price £16.99.

This volume is the second, paperback, edition of a hardback first published in 1999 by Tempus. Its aim is to present a national survey of what are generically referred to as 'cup and ring marks'. Beckensall certainly achieves this although some may be a little disappointed by the use of the similar format and content found in earlier and subsequent books. However this book does offer new information with reference to newly discovered sites as well as the use of many excellent photographs not previously published. The geographic scope covers all the British Isles with the exceptions of Cumbria and Ireland, although the author has recently published another book exclusively devoted to *Prehistoric Rock Art in Cumbria: Landscape and Monuments* (Tempus, 2002).

The book is divided into seven chapters, although half of the volume is taken up by Chapter 5, which is effectively a survey by region. The first chapter is a short introduction that relates the author's first encounter with rock art, the search for meaning and the implicit recognition of the importance of context in constructing that meaning. Chapter two, though incorrectly numbered as chapter one, deals with 'symbols and motifs' starting with a discussion of the significance of circularity in prehistory before moving on to explain the vocabulary employed in the study of cup and ring marks. Chapter three is concerned with 'panels of rock art' and uses a selection of rock art panels from around Britain to explore variation in design and arrangement. The

examples range from sites in West Yorkshire, through County Durham and Northumberland, to Galloway and Argyll. The text and accompanying illustrations form a descriptive narrative of eleven choice outcrop/boulder sites. Chapter four is devoted to the study of rock art and begins by listing the most influential work undertaken on British examples since the first records in the early nineteenth century. The narrative then turns to a short discussion of symbols before reverting to a condensed trawl through Morris' list of 104 explanations.

Chapter five, entitled 'Art in the landscape' is one of the more fascinating chapters that have been written on rock art. Here the writer shares his in-depth knowledge of cup and ring concentrations in relation to their surrounding landscapes. The chapter deserves special credit for bringing together a truly nationwide coverage of known rock art, whose corpus has expanded significantly over the last decade. Chapter six turns to the issue of 'rock art in context' and here the author focuses on those sites where rock art has been found in association with standing stones and stone circles, burial monuments, rock shelters and house sites. The final chapter is a one-page statement on the state of the art and looks towards the joint Bournemouth University/University College London 'Rock Art Pilot Project' (undertaken for English Heritage) for a lead in the future management and public presentation of sites – a crucial initiative that is not before time.

Overall this is a solid, tactile, well-presented and thoroughly researched book. It is, however, to be hoped that Tempus iron out their topographical errors in subsequent editions!

Clive Waddington

Anthony Birley, *Garrison Life at Vindolanda: A Band of Brothers* (Tempus, Stroud, 2002),

192pp. 151 ills. ISBN 0 7524 1950 1. Price (paperback): £15.99.

Here is Professor Anthony Birley in fine form and on home ground. B. has few equals in the art of constructing plausible and sharply observed narratives from the fragments of inscriptions and papyri. These are precisely the skills needed to interpret the writing tablets from Vindolanda, most of which belong in that tantalisingly ill-documented gap between the departure of Agricola and the building of Hadrian's Wall. This book covers something of the same territory and material as Alan Bowman's *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier* (1994), which has been an invaluable introduction for students during the last decade. B. starts with an engaging account of the past history of Vindolanda and of the excavations and, incidentally, does not shy away from reference to the controversies that surrounded the excavation, particularly in 1973 when the first tablets came to light. Then he proceeds to show how the Vindolanda tablets can be used to recreate in fascinating detail the lives of the officers and men of the Batavian and Tungrian cohorts, who occupied Vindolanda in the early second century. These are the 'band of brothers' of the book's title, a community where the officers and men regularly address each other as 'brother' and their wives refer to each other as 'sister', as if these units were one big family (B. might have directed the reader to R. MacMullen, 'The Legion as a Society' in *Changes in the Roman Empire* (Princeton, 1990), 225–35). As this language implies, their world was an inward-looking one which viewed the locals with a mixture of suspicion and condescension. Indeed, the Vindolanda evidence deserves to figure more prominently in debates about the construction of identity in the Roman world. Consider the remarkable draft of an appeal against unfair punishment (Tablet 344), which was almost certainly addressed to Hadrian himself, when he visited the site of the Wall, by a soldier, who emphasises that he is a *homo transmarinus* ('a man from overseas'), i.e. not a despised local, even though presumably he is a Tungrian from Belgium. The writer clearly

assumed that such a point might carry some weight. B. has also imaginatively provided a context for the famous sneering reference to *Brittunculi* ('little Brits') in a fragment of a memorandum (Tablet 164), by arguing that the document was an officer's negative assessment of the abilities of the troops conscripted around AD 100 from the *Anavionenses* of Annandale, who now appear in another unpublished tablet at Vindolanda.

Throughout the book B. has made full use of the many, as yet unpublished, tablets which came up in such numbers particularly in the excavations of 1993 and 1994, and so were not available to Bowman for his account in *Life and Letters*. B. is inspired in part by a certain impatience, because the third volume of Alan Bowman's and David Thomas' meticulous publication of the Vindolanda Tablets has long been awaited. Vindolanda is lucky to have two of the best in the business working on this difficult material. However, as so often in such matters, the papyrologists' natural desire for authoritative, fully researched publication can seem frustrating to historians who long for the evidence to get into the public domain as fast as possible to inspire debate and to inform the excavation reports. B. relies on the editors' advice, but also offers his own readings and in a number of cases seeks to challenge their earlier interpretations. Two such cases are substantial. The first is on the vexed debate about the addresses on some of the Vindolanda letters. Several letters have a place name in the locative as part of the address (*Londini* ('at London'), *Coris* ('at Coria') etc.); is this the location of the person to whom the letter is addressed or is it where the letter was written? Bowman and Thomas (and indeed others) have argued for the former, but B. plausibly puts the case for the latter, which is more natural and in line with, for example, the practice in Cicero's correspondence. Secondly, B's reconstruction and interpretation of the five surviving tablets of the *expensa* of the commander Cerialis (Tablets 1474) differs significantly from Bowman and Thomas in *Britannia* 27, 1996, 307ff. His detailed reconstruction does not answer all the problems any more than the original editors

did. The lists are principally concerned with the provision of poultry (chicken dinners seeming to be standard fare for the officers) and B. does make the attractive suggestion that the lists are not about the prefect's household buying poultry from the various individuals named, but about selling birds to them from the prefect's yard (*stabulum*). If so, we have yet another fascinating insight into how army officers tried to make ends meet.

This is a book full of telling detail and imaginative reconstruction. As B. shows the tablets have so much to tell us about matters as diverse as diet, eye-disease, Roman army 'bumf', friendships and family life. My own particular favourite, given the Vindolanda officers' passion for hunting, is the appearance in an unpublished tablet (1475) of the best two breeds of Celtic hunting dogs, the *segosus* and *vertragus* (see Arrian, *Cynegetica* 3ff.). This book is by far the best attempt yet to set the tablets in context. It is written so well and so amiably that it will be indispensable reading for every visitor to Vindolanda, whether scholar or layman.

Jeremy Paterson

N. J. Higham (ed.), *Archaeology of the Roman Empire: a Tribute to the Life and Works of Professor Barri Jones* [BAR International Series 940, 2001], pp. x + 355; many ill. ISBN 1 84171 232 9.

Barri Jones, appointed professor in the University of Manchester at the early age of 36, was an archaeologist with a remarkable breadth of interests and achievements. He worked in Wales, north-west England and Scotland, and also in Italy and North Africa; his interests, although mainly focused on the Roman frontiers, also embraced Roman gold-mining and early Roman Italy; he was an excavator, surveyor and aerial archaeologist; although apparently not much interested in details of administration, he played a crucial role in the development of British rescue archaeology in the early 1970s and went on to found and edit *Popular Archaeology*, a magazine aimed at a general readership. It was a grievous loss when

in 1999 he died suddenly, hill-walking in Snowdonia. He had been on the eve of retirement, and a planned *Festschrift* sadly had to become the memorial volume considered here.

The editor has succeeded in assembling contributions from former pupils and co-workers that reflect Barri Jones' enormous range. Articles on modern planning issues affecting the Romano-British landscape of Kent (Williams) and on Reginald Bainbrigg, the Westmorland antiquarian and schoolmaster (Edwards), contrast with contributions on Philo of Byblos (MacAdam) and floodwater farming in Libya and Jordan (Barker). The volume consists of 33 articles divided into six sections: Roman Britain, Public Policy and Archaeology, The Eastern Empire, North Africa, Methodology and Technology, and Religion in the Empire and Beyond.

This readership will perhaps be most interested in the articles on northern Britain. Two deal with aspects of Iron Age and Roman settlement in south-west Scotland and north-west England (Gregory and Nevell); there is also a case study by Hanson and Sharpe of prospection techniques employed on the survey of enclosures in the Clyde valley. A central question in the study of these settlements concerns the effects of the Roman conquest and of the proximity of Roman forts. A. Birley's contribution on the *Anavionenses*, the people of Annandale, sets out the evidence for a census of them by Haterius Nepos, drawing partly on new evidence supplied by the Vindolanda writing-tablets. The purpose of this *census*, Birley suggests, was to levy recruits for the army, their destination being the German frontier.

Two other articles deal with the Roman conquest of northern Britain. Coin-evidence is used to identify possible pre-Agricolan sites in north-west England and to suggest that this early phase of the advance, in the early AD 70s, extended into Scotland as far as the River Tay (Shotter). This early activity is thought to have involved the beginning of the Gask Ridge system, a chain of towers, fortlets and forts in Perthshire, which is the subject of a separate contribution by Woolliscroft. He interprets his excavations to show that the system lasted

longer than was once thought: two periods of construction seem to have been found at several towers. Other papers of relevance to northern Britain include a reassessment of the River Dee harbour at Chester (Waddelove), and observations on a Roman military diploma of AD 135 from Wroxeter which names the majority of the auxiliary units in Britain at the time (Holder).

In all these papers the authors pay tribute to Barri Jones as teacher and archaeologist. The whole collection, including the contributions on subjects beyond northern Britain, is fitting testimony to his great achievements.

Paul Bidwell

Mike McCarthy, *Roman Carlisle and the Lands of the Solway* (Stroud, Tempus, 2002), pp. 162, many ills. ISBN 0 7524 1955 2. Price: £16.99.

Book titles vary a great deal in the amount of information they convey. The construction of this one suggests that the main topic is Roman Carlisle and that the writer will explore the relationship between Carlisle and 'the lands of the Solway', a term which seems to add scope and a romantic perspective to the more business-like 'Roman Carlisle'. It is distinctly curious, then, to consult fig. 1 and find a map which shows northern England and southern Scotland and bears only two names: 'Carlisle' and 'Hadrian's Wall'. There is no mention of the Solway. It soon becomes clear that the discussion of this undefined geographical area extends over a much wider cultural and time span than the Roman period, and takes in many sites not readily found in general maps or atlases. Yet there is in this book no map which makes their location known. This lack highlights the most frustrating aspect of the book, namely the handling of information and the manner of directing the reader to further information.

The book consists of 162 pages, 16 of which are taken up by the cover (pp. 1 and 2!), Preface, Acknowledgements, Further Reading and Index. Of the 146 pages of text, 24 (16%) are taken up with the Introduction and a consideration of the landscape; 80 (55%) are concerned with Roman Carlisle; 18 (12%) with

the prehistoric period; and a further 24 (16%) with the post-Roman period. There are 16 unnumbered pages which carry 19 coloured illustrations, to add to the book's 70 black and white illustrations.

It will immediately be apparent that the treatment in only 18 pages of the prehistoric period in an area as large and vague as the 'Lands of the Solway' cannot be other than superficial; and, given the disparity of available information, the 24 pages devoted to the post-Roman period seems almost generous.

There are plenty of interesting facts in both these last-named sections, but no means of finding out more about them, a point which brings us to the question of the potential readership of such a book. In this case this will almost certainly consist of people who have an interest and background in archaeology, perhaps through membership of a society or attendance at a course of lectures. They might well want to know more about many sites and finds mentioned in the book, and turn therefore, to the 'Further Reading' at the end. Here they are directed to books, and a few papers, under four general headings: General, Roman Carlisle and the Carvetii, Hadrian's Wall and its Forts, and the Inner Solway.

In the General list *The Lowland Wetlands of Cumbria* is said, rightly, to be essentially technical; but its inclusion is warranted by its possession of 'summaries accessible to the non-specialist'. There follows the first of two occasions when the enquirer is directed to the *Transactions* of the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Archaeological Society (*sic* – actually the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society) and of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society (which later occurs with its two attributes reversed, as does the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Society). How is he or she to tackle the nearly 200 volumes of which these *Transactions* consist? What again will the reader who needs this kind of direction make of 'the magisterial corpus of Anglo-Saxon sculpture by Rosemary Cramp and Richard Bailey' without its actual title or date of publication? How will the reader find

'papers by Nora Chadwick, Molly Miller and Rosemary Cramp'? It is not worth exemplifying the same kind of thing from the other three sections, but one point must be made plain: the '*Handbooks to the Roman Wall*' are not 'updated every ten years to coincide with the Pilgrimage'; nor is *Hadrian's Wall 1989-1999* anything to do with the *Handbook*; it is the latest in a series of specially-written volumes intended for the members of the Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall, which is now held every ten years.

The section on further reading highlights an important aspect of Carlisle compared with many other important archaeological sites. The latter have been discussed in separate publications, for the specialist and non-specialist respectively; Carlisle has not. McCarthy lists Willmott's *Birdoswald: Excavations of a Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall* (1997) – actually 1996 – and adds that it is 'now available in a more accessible form in Birdoswald (2000)' (presumably *Birdoswald Roman Fort; 1800 years on Hadrian's Wall* (2001)). But for Carlisle he cites only two excavation reports and a specialist report on some of the material from a third, and then refers to a paper of 1978 which should be, and is, well out of date. One is disappointed that the author, who has directed excavations in Carlisle for so long, does not offer a real examination of the two aspects of Roman Carlisle which make it unusual if not unique: the relationship of the Carlisle fort to Hadrian's Wall fort at Stanwix, only 1 km away; and the relationship between the Carlisle fort and the town. The physical proximity of the two forts is mentioned more than once, but little is said about how they might or might not be related. The author does mention the survival of the Carlisle fort while the town flourished, but the point is not explored, and it remains difficult to see why Carlisle became a town at all and did not just remain a *vicus*. Neither the Roman town nor its hinterland is lacking in archaeological interest but this book, with its divided interest, whets our appetite rather than satisfying it.

B. J. N. Edwards.

M. G. Snape (ed), *English Episcopal Acta 24, Durham 1154-1195* (British Academy, Oxford University Press, London, 2002), pp. 185. ISBN 0 197262 341. £45.00.

To mark the centenary of the British Academy the *acta* of Hugh of Le Puiset, Bishop of Durham, have been published under the editorship of Martin Snape. It will be continued by him in volume 25, to cover the episcopates of Philip of Poitou, Richard Marsh and Richard Poore, which will contain the index to both volumes. It follows the earlier volume of *Durham Episcopal Charters 1071-1152*, edited for the Surtees Society as volume 79 by the late Professor H. S. Offler.

The bishops of Durham were not only diocesans but also feudal lords of a considerable area of the diocese. The *acta* shed light on the development of the bishop's demesne land and the expansion of cultivation into marginal lands of County Durham. They also support the fact that the Benedictine priory at Durham dominated the area between Tyne and Tees, to the exclusion of other orders, although the idea of the editor that their influence was equal between Tyne and Tweed cannot be upheld. The Durham convent did not own land there outside the enclaves of Norhamshire, Islandshire, and Bedlingtonshire. The Benedictine cell at Tynemouth was sheltered by its mother-house of St Albans. The Augustinian house at Hexham was under the protection of the archbishop of York, and the cell at Bamburgh was dependent on Nostell.

Mr Snape provides outline sketches of the episcopates of Puiset, Poitou, Marsh and Poore. (Of these only Bishop Puiset has attracted a Life of his own – by G. V. Scammell, *Hugh du Puiset* (Cambridge, 1956)). He describes the work of the archdeacons of Durham and Northumberland and the bishop's chaplains. He continues with an analysis of the charter witnesses (xxxix-li), using them as a guide to the dating of the charters, and concludes with a study of their diplomatic. There are interesting photographs illustrating the various seals used by the bishops whose *acta* are presented in the twin volumes, together

with the various ways they might be affixed to the document. Two illustrate the contrasting handwriting that might be employed. (The 'Durham forgeries', fabricated to fortify the monks' claims to various properties, are attributed to the time of Puiset.)

Two thirds of the known *acta* (known sometimes only by oblique references in chronicles, but indicated in the collection under the name of the beneficiary) concern the temporalities of the see. Some detail is unexpected. In a charter dated 1154 x c1160 we find a reference to the Tyne Bridge – which previously has been dated post-1170 by reason of the dedication of its chapel of St. Thomas (Becket) (p. 83). There is also much of interest in the way of place-names, which is not always highlighted, as being beyond the remit of the editor. Robert de Cockfield, for example, apparently gave his name to the settlement of Cockfield, not the other way round (p. xlix and footnote 75).

C. M. Fraser

Christopher J. Brooke, *Safe Sanctuaries: Security and Defence in Anglo-Scottish Border Churches 1290–1690* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2000), pp xx + 408, 174 figs, 7 maps. ISBN 1 859776 535 0. £25.00.

This is a well-planned account of the buildings which gave shelter, in times of raids and skirmishes, to the inhabitants of the northern counties of modern England and the southern ones of modern Scotland. Dr Brooke defines his area of study as the six Border Marches; he describes the castle and towers, but his main concern is to draw attention to the way in which the churches and monasteries provided places of refuge – what he calls 'defensible churches'. Thorough fieldwork took ten years to complete, and has resulted in a gazetteer of six parts. Unfortunately, the sixteen-page bibliography lists the sources alphabetically by author, without distinguishing between primary and secondary material, and references in the text are to the publication alone without page numbers.

The first map shows the sixteenth-century boundaries of the Marches, and their principal settlements, crossing modern political boundaries, but omitting the southern part of the English West March, presumably in order to achieve a scale which allows clarity. Figures include plans, historic illustrations, and many photographs by the author showing the details which prove his theory. There is also a useful diagram 'after P. F. Ryder' showing the features which indicate that a church could have been used for shelter in troubled times. Descriptions of churches set them in context, both historically and topographically, and then analyse the development of structures as they were adapted to provide secure shelter. Attention is often drawn to the loss of evidence, owing to lack of care, or even of recording, when repairs, restorations or demolitions have been carried out; and while past errors cannot be undone, it is to be hoped that at least anyone who has read this book will never remove significant structural evidence, or fail to record it if it is discovered in the course of repair work.

The term 'pele tower'; is used without reference to the now-frequent discussion of the name of that building type, and it has not been possible to cover all recent research, such as the work at Harbottle Castle. But no matter where a line is drawn there are always some things which fall on the wrong side of it. For the comprehensiveness and the insight it provides, this work, the first full study to deal with the topic, is a significant achievement.

In his acknowledgements Dr Brooke shows how difficult it is to carry out such a survey; among those thanked are staff of the Diocese of Carlisle and Newcastle – who not only gave information about incumbents, but also about 'how to get hold of a ladder at some remote fellside church'. This very useful book will show us how to look at churches with fresh eyes, and will no doubt rapidly find its way onto the bookshelves of those who love the landscapes and the buildings of the Anglo-Scottish Borders.

Grace McCombie

## SHORTER NOTICES

S. Beckensall, *Prehistoric Rock Art in Cumbria: Landscapes and Monuments* (Tempus, Stroud, 2002), pp. 160; many ills. ISBN 0 7524 2526 9. Price £16.99.

This is a companion volume to the 2001 book by the same author on Northumberland's rock art. Inevitably there are some overlaps in introductory and interpretative content with that earlier book but it contains some fascinating new material and many of the photographs are quite stunning.

I. P. Stephenson, *The Anglo-Saxon Shield* (Tempus, Stroud, 2002), pp. 159; many ills. ISBN 0 7524 2529 3. Price £17.99.

Ian Stephenson's Newcastle University thesis now appears in modified form as a Tempus paperback. Though exhaustive in its treatment and range of sources, it makes for a spirited read as the author invokes parallels as seemingly remote as Napoleon and Zulu warriors to reconstruct weapon tactics and social implications. The text is fully illustrated by a series of drawings by Miriam Daniels.

**Editor's note.**

Dr Grace Simpson has drawn attention to the fact that in Peter Hill's paper published in this journal in 2001 (*AA*<sup>5</sup>, 29, 3, n.1), a footnote might read as erroneously implying that she had stated that the Newcastle section of Hadrian's Wall extended as far as the Roman Bridge. Mr Hill's citation of Dr Simpson's *Watermills and Military Works*, 1976, 10 at this point was actually intended to relate to the final phrase of his opening sentence, referring to evidence that the Wall section between Newcastle and Wallsend was conventionally viewed as additional to the original Wall scheme. The author and editor are happy to clarify that Dr Simpson has never claimed that the Wall ended at the Roman Bridge.

