

XIII

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES, 2010

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

Alan Rushworth (ed.), *Housesteads Roman Fort — The Grandest Station: Excavation and Survey at Housesteads, 1954–95* (English Heritage, Swindon 2009): *volume 1, Structural Report and Discussion*, pp. xviii + 338, 206 illus; *volume 2, The Material Assemblages*, pp. xi + 275, 103 illus. ISBN 978 1 84802 026 9. £100.

The Roman fort at Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall is one of the iconic monuments of the Roman empire. Excavations have been conducted there over the last 200 years, most notably those of Bosanquet in 1898, when he produced a complete plan of the fort (albeit largely based on trenching), and the post-1945 campaigns funded by English Heritage and its predecessors. Most of this work has been published in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, but Alan Rushworth has brought to final publication the 1974–81 excavations in the north-east corner of the fort. More than that, he has included all other unpublished work in the fort and its environs in this report, re-evaluating it all in relation to our current perceptions of Housesteads, Hadrian's Wall, and Roman frontier studies. It is a magnificent achievement and we are greatly in his debt, and also that of English Heritage which was the primary funder of the excavation, of the post-excavation work, and of the publication.

The report is clearly set out. Volume 1 contains: a summary; a review of earlier work; reports on the excavation of the north-eastern barrack-block, of an adjacent area of the defences, and of the investigation of the headquarters building in 1954; a review of other work, both within and outside the fort; and a discussion of the site's history. Volume 2 contains reports on the finds. The catalogues are detailed and most are accompanied by discussion sections, though not the report on the coarse pottery, possibly owing to the untimely death of John Dore. Nor are the finds particularly integrated into the main body of the report: there is no section on 'life in the fort', for example. The discussion largely relates to the structural history of the site, including post-Roman activity. In some ways, the framework of the report reflects the period of the excavation, being 'traditional' in style.

For the first time, we have a hint at prehistoric cultivation of the site prior to the arrival of the Romans, as well as confirmation that the visible terraces south of the fort are Roman in date. Here limited excavation by Jim Crow complemented the wonderful RCHME survey of the fort environs, a survey which went as far south as the modern road and westward to MC 37 and beyond.

It was at Housesteads in the 1960s that John Wilkes recognised a distinctive form of barrack-block which he termed a 'chalet', and which he dated to the late third or early fourth century. The coin sequence in the civil settlement ends in the 270s, as at other sites in the north. It is not straightforward to suggest that the civilians moved into the fort into the new-style barracks for this is not supported by the finds assemblage. Where the civilians went after the apparent end of their extra-mural settlements in the late third century remains a problem.

An area of particular interest in this report is the space behind the fort wall. Insufficiently examined in the past, at Housesteads we can perceive frequent changes here, perhaps related to a lack of space elsewhere in the fort. In the third century, metal-working was undertaken here, but in the later fourth century the rampart backing was re-instated as a massive bank of earth in a style now recognised at other northern forts. Finally, here was recovered possible evidence for late or post-Roman activity in the form of small oval stone structures; one of these has been tentatively interpreted as a Christian church.

This is a major contribution to frontier studies, challenging in some of its conclusions and an appropriate memorial to two of the excavators, John Gillam and Charles Daniels, no longer with us.

David J. Breeze

Tony Wilmott (ed.), *Hadrian's Wall: Archaeological Research by English Heritage 1976–2000* (English Heritage, Swindon, 2009), pp. xii + 454; 436 illus. ISBN 978 1 905624 71 3. £40.

In this book, Tony Wilmott assembles reports on development- and management-driven research work by English Heritage on Hadrian's Wall in the last quarter of the twentieth century — and much more besides. The major excavation reports include the results of three complete, but narrow, transects across the Wall and associated works (Crosby-on-Eden, 1981; Appletree, 1999; Black Carts, 1997). The findings at Appletree and Black Carts have persuaded W. that at least in places the Vallum had two southern mounds, the 'marginal mound' being a primary feature. Not all will accept this without reservation: elsewhere the visible structural sequence suggests that the marginal mound belongs to a reinstatement of the Vallum following a period of slighting. Such contradictions thrive on shortage of excavated evidence and will only be resolved by moving on in the future to examine these neglected works in a longitudinal excavation. (The recent *Research Framework for the Wall* proposes transects of the Wall works, 200 m wide). The potential of environmental evidence is impressively realised, with a vivid picture of the wet grassland landscape (in interesting contrast to the ubiquitous pre-Wall cultivation on the east side of the country), and of the method by which it was stripped to provide the materials for the Turf Wall at Appletree and Crosby. A programme of evaluation trenching on 11 milecastles (to assess the effects of ploughing) is reported in detail and forms the basis from which any future investigation of these sites will proceed. Milecastle 62 was located for the first time but three (63, 69 and 70) still elude discovery. There is full treatment of developments at the fort of Birdoswald subsequent to W.'s ground-breaking 1997 report. There are several key points of interest here. It is shown that the Vallum ditch was not filled in until after 150, and thus the stone fort clearly co-existed with the Vallum diversion. This should compel a reconsideration of whether there ever was an earlier turf and timber fort at Birdoswald, for the existence of a predecessor fort is based on little more than the assumption — now effectively discredited — that the Vallum diversion and stone fort are too close together to be contemporary. Certain features recorded in the 1930s and interpreted as belonging to a timber fort could be interpreted in other ways. Three early pits found by W. beneath the northern half of the stone fort are claimed to indicate a projecting timber fort, but these could relate to the building of the stone fort. Dispensing with the turf fort would remove some of the difficulty of fitting the Birdoswald sequence into the necessarily narrow time-frame of c. 124–38, and would accord with the fact that the plan of the stone fort is of the very earliest type to appear on the Wall.

Inside the fort, W. gives more details of the remarkable basilica, interpreted as an infantry training hall, found in the northern part of the fort, and reports on work on the barracks there, of which only fragments were explored. I was left wondering whether he can be sure that the apparently earliest (stone) phase of barracks is really Hadrianic. The Hadrianic barracks at Wallsend are now known to have been of timber, and such early structures easily escape observation unless later stone walls are completely removed and excavation is conducted in extensive areas. Nevertheless, the modified ('Period 3') barracks undoubtedly give a useful insight into the third-century arrangement. Outside the fort, besides discussing new evidence for the vicus and for cemeteries, W. describes a complex of third-century timber buildings on the promontory south of the fort, associated with Frisian-style pottery ('Housesteads Ware'). W. deduces the presence of a Germanic irregular unit, and even describes the complex as a 'numerus fort'. An alternative view might be that these buildings housed the civilian dependants of irregulars who were accommodated inside the fort. Elsewhere, Paul Austen reports on his work of 1988 which established the true shape and size of the fort at Bowness-on-Solway. Alan Whitworth offers a retrospect on Charles Anderson, that non-archaeologist who disinterred so much of Hadrian's Wall for the Ministry of Works in the twentieth century, and also an illustrated catalogue of the recently discovered collection of 166 drawings of the Wall made by James Irwin Coates between 1877 and 1896. Each picture is obligingly dated by the artist and several contain information unrecorded elsewhere, especially on sites which he saw being excavated. There are some minor reservations. The book could have done with better proof-reading — there are a lot of minor typographical errors for so handsome and expensive a volume. (In the Summary, the transections of the Wall become 'transactions' — and this is unfortunately carried through into the German translation.) Sometimes the blaze of state-of-the-art science disguises a certain imprecision. At Appletree for example, no actual dimensions are offered for the Turf Wall and the berm fronting it. But overall there is a treasury of information here, and W. is to be warmly thanked for assembling a volume that will take its place among the key reference works on the Wall.

N. Hodgson

David J. Breeze and David J. Woolliscroft (ed.) *Excavation and Survey at Roman Burgh-by-Sands* (Cumbria Archaeological Research Reports, 1. Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society 2009) pp. 82, 32 illus. ISBN 978 1 873124 47 5. £10

This is the first in a new series which will make available those archaeological reports from Cumbria that are too long to be included in the *Transactions* of our sister society.

Between 1978 and 1982, Barri Jones excavated three sites in and around Burgh-by-Sands, two of which — both forts — he had discovered from the air. These excavations were unpublished at the time of his death in 1999, and the two editors have pieced together the available evidence. In the vicarage garden, Jones revealed a number of buildings within the *vicus* of the Roman fort (Burgh II) that projects across the line of the Wall. These buildings dated from the late second to the late third century. A geophysical survey by English Heritage, included here, subsequently located the E and N sides of the fort. To the S of the village, Jones had discovered a Hadrianic fort (Burgh I), apparently preceded by a timber tower, within which a

headquarters building and a granary were identified. A larger fort — or a camp — (Burgh III) lay SW of the village; it also seemed to be Hadrianic in date, but investigations were limited. The context for these two new sites is unclear, and much more needs to be done before we understand this western end of the Wall.

David J. Breeze (with photography by David Hendrie) *Edge of Empire. Rome's Scottish Frontier: The Antonine Wall* (Birlinn, Edinburgh 2008), pp. 128, 60 illus. ISBN 978 1 84158 737 0. £14.99.

A brilliantly simple concept: 50 vignettes, each consisting of a full-page illustration, paired with a page of text, covering every aspect of the Antonine Wall and its after-life. Rounded off with a list of the best places to visit; the essential museums; the archives; and suggestions for further reading, it adds up to a comprehensive introduction to the northern Wall.

Humphrey Welfare

Matthew Townend, *The Vikings and Victorian Lakeland: the Norse Medievalism of W. G. Collingwood and his Contemporaries* (Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Extra Series, 34; Kendal 2009), pp. xvi + 328, 58 illus. ISBN 978 1 873124 49 9. £35.

W. G. Collingwood joined our Society in 1913, and in 1925 contributed a classic paper to *Archaeologia Aeliana* on the pre-Norman stone carvings at Hexham which dominated our thinking on early Northumbrian sculpture for the next fifty years. But it was in Cumbria, and as editor of our sister society's *Transactions* for some twenty-five years, that he had his greatest impact. It is therefore entirely fitting that this extremely handsome volume should emerge from the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.

Artist, geologist, antiquary, novelist, saga translator, guide-book writer; here was a man whose life and work was intertwined with those of John Ruskin, Chancellor R. S. Ferguson, Canon H. D. Rawnsley, Arthur Ransome and other giants of the Lake District in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Though he was active on a larger stage — as Fine Art professor at Reading, as interpreter of Ruskin's thought and writings, and as President of the Viking Society for Northern Research — it was in the Lake District where his loyalties lay and whose man-made history and landscape, particularly in the Viking period, he did so much to elucidate.

At long last Collingwood has been given the biographer his extraordinary achievements deserve. Matthew Townend has meticulously unearthed an amazing treasure of letters, notebooks and papers scattered across Britain, Sweden, Iceland and the U.S.A. He thoughtfully traces Collingwood's debts to men like William Morris, Thomas De Quincey and Robert Ferguson. As an Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon scholar, he is alive to the pioneering nature of Collingwood's investigations into names and vocabulary, and the importance of his Icelandic connections and his saga translations. With a perceptive understanding of Victorian sensibilities he comments illuminatingly on Collingwood's novels like *Thorstein of the Mere*, and he readily understands his complex personal and academic relationships with men like W. S. Calverley and C. A. Parker who were gradually recognising the Viking-age implications of so many of the stone carvings emerging from churches as the result of Victorian restorations.

His detailed narrative is supported by a rich set of drawings and paintings from the artist's hand. Those who only know of Collingwood through the drawings which were reproduced



so crudely in his magisterial work *Northumbrian Crosses of the pre-Norman Age* (1927), will be stunned by the landscape paintings, drawings and complex book illustrations — even a menu card — included in this book. Matthew Townend and the CWAAS have done their hero proud.

Richard N. Bailey

Also received:

John Carlson and Joyce Carlson, *Newcastle Through Time* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud 2009), pp. 96, 180 illus. ISBN 978 1 84868 168 2. £12.99

Darren W. Ritson and Michael J. Hallowell, *Ghost Taverns: An Illustrated Gazetteer of Haunted Pubs in the North-East of England* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud 2009), pp. 192, 40 illus. ISBN 978 1 84868 140 8. £20

Ken Hutchinson, *Wallsend Through Time* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud 2009), pp. 96, 180 illus. ISBN 978 1 84868 320 4. £12.99



