

BOOK REVIEWS

These reviews are published as the views of the persons who have written them, and they have been accepted in good faith as accurate and honest expressions of opinion.

Lindsay Allason-Jones (ed.), *Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. xviii + 356, 80 illus. ISBN 9780521860123, £50.00 (hardback); 9780521677523, £18.99 (paperback).

One of the principal frustrations of teaching small finds has been the absence of a useful companion text; thankfully, we now have *Artefacts in Roman Britain*. This edited volume consists of contributions by some of the foremost experts, written expressly for the purpose of helping students understand the significance of artefacts in the interpretation of Roman Britain. The volume opens with an introductory chapter by L. Allason-Jones that offers guidance on the observational and deductive process of object identification. The introduction is followed by 13 thematic contributions: commerce (R. J. Brickstock); travel and transport (N. Crummy); industry (W. H. Manning); agriculture (S. Rees); weaponry and military equipment (M. C. Bishop); writing and communication (R. S. O. Tomlin); domestic life (Q. Mould); heating and lighting (H. Eckardt); personal ornament (E. Swift); recreation (L. Allason-Jones); medicine and hygiene (R. Jackson); religion (J. Bird); and funerary contexts (H. E. M. Cool).

The introduction is essential reading for students of small finds of any period and focuses on the range of questions that pertain to a single object. These questions serve as a framework for all the subsequent chapters. The separation of the contributions into thematic discussions is a great strength of the volume; the themes successfully guide the reader to consider objects as indicators of human activities, offering an important counter to the standard description and discussion of objects typical of small-finds catalogues. Whilst these thematic discussions are not in and of themselves new, the collation of a number of themes in a single volume is exceptional and rather enlightening. Various artefacts (e.g. baskets, crucibles, and shoes) make multiple appearances under a number of themes, and many of the authors make a point of offering a multi-sensory appreciation of their particular theme. In addition, the choice and use of different materials and production methods are incorporated. Furthermore, the themes provide guidance for discussion without being mutually exclusive or geographically predisposed.

Despite the 55 plates and 25 figures, each chapter discusses so many objects that the inquisitive reader will certainly want to supplement their reading with a good internet search engine. The text is fully referenced throughout, and the 34-page bibliography is an excellent resource in its own right. The index usefully collates sites and object types.

Artefacts in Roman Britain is no substitute for the invaluable experience of handling artefacts, nor can it match the detail found in studies of specific classes of artefacts. But (as clearly stated in the preface), that is not the intention of the volume. *Artefacts in Roman Britain* provides a useful and essential introduction to small finds that has hitherto been lacking, offering its readers a means of appreciating the significance of small finds beyond mere identification.

Rob Collins

Rebecca H. Jones, *Roman Camps in Scotland* (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011; pp. xxix + 367; 221 illus. ISBN 978 0903903 50 9. £30) and Rebecca H. Jones, *Roman Camps in Britain* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud, 2012; pp. 160; 94 illus. ISBN 978 1 84868 688 5. £18.99.)

Northumberland contains the remains of far more of the temporary camps of the Roman army than any other English county — 67 — most of which are along Hadrian's Wall and Dere Street. A detailed inventory of all such camps in England was put together in the 1990s (Welfare and Swan 1995), and the rich Welsh material was then assembled (Davies and Jones 2006). With the appearance of this handsome book the archaeological story can now be traced into the Borders and throughout central and eastern Scotland. Britain has more known camps than any other province of the empire — itself a puzzling statistic — and Dr Jones's energy in completing the full inventory is an impressive achievement which will throw fresh light on the life and activity of the Roman army. In its introductory chapters, the Scottish volume covers all of the principal topics: classification, and variations in size and in form; the gradual process of discovery as technologies have expanded; the evidence for the use and reuse of camps, and the factors contributing to the survival of these fragile earthworks; and the difficulties of marrying the evidence with the historical context, and with the evidence from the Roman military handbooks. Most of the book is, however, devoted to the gazetteer in which the plans of the camps are set on an OS map base, albeit necessarily at a range of scales. Comparison is aided by illustration 47 — which extends for an astonishing 18 pages — in which a thumbnail outline of every camp is reproduced at 1:10,000. Moreover, as this is paralleled by similar compilations in the English and Welsh volumes, comparison across the whole province is readily possible. Few improvements could be wished for in this book, although many of the aerial photographs are really too small to reveal their contents. Also, the opportunity that an inventory presents to tidy up the names of sites (somewhat randomly assigned at the time of discovery) has not been taken. Thus, in the alphabetical gazetteer, the camps adjacent to the fort at Camelon, for instance, are scattered as they are listed under names beginning with the letters E, H, L, and W.

Rebecca Jones has an unrivalled knowledge of the camps in Britain, and this has been distilled into a general introduction to the subject, published by Amberley. Inevitably, and rightly, this covers the same broad topics. It is copiously illustrated, with a very useful list of further reading, and this very readable book should stimulate more people to investigate this peculiarly British phenomenon. Although the three larger volumes provide a strong basis for this further research, there is certainly much more to do. In England, where the resources at the time allowed it, each surviving earthwork was planned in detail, and all of the crop-mark sites were investigated on the ground; this was not possible in Wales and Scotland, so there is more that consideration (on the ground) of the microtopography can tell us about the sites there and about the choices that the Roman surveyors made when choosing and laying out each camp. Geophysical survey, and the increasing number of instances of the excavation of camp interiors, is rapidly expanding our knowledge about the use of camps, although there is still too little information about their exact dating. There are many opportunities here.

Davies, J. L. and Jones, R. H. 2006 *Roman Camps in Wales and the Marches*, Cardiff.

Welfare, H. and Swan, V. 1995 *Roman Camps in England: the Field Archaeology*, London.

Humphrey Welfare

John Poulter, *The Planning of Roman Roads and Walls in Northern Britain* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud, 2010; pp. 192; 163 illus. ISBN 978 1 84868 548 2. £18.99), and *Surveying Roman Military Landscapes across Northern Britain: the planning of Roman Dere Street, Hadrian's Wall and the Vallum, and the Antonine Wall in Scotland* — with a supplementary report on the mapping of the Antonine Wall by Peter McKeague (British Archaeological Reports, British Series 492, Archaeopress, Oxford, 2009; pp. ix + 141; 117 illus. ISBN 978 1 4073 0519 6. £39.)

These two volumes describe work carried out by Poulter on the planning of Roman roads and Walls in northern Britain. A common characteristic of Roman roads is that their alignment consists of straight sections separated by abrupt changes of direction. Though perhaps not as obvious, many lengths of Hadrian's Wall and of the Antonine Wall have the same characteristic. The work of Poulter considers the process by which these structures were planned.

From the above description one might, at first sight, think that the books would only be of interest to surveyors with an interest in archaeology, but the inferences that Poulter draws from his work have wide and profound implications for Roman archaeology in the area. These include: the location of the Flavian fort at Newstead; the dating of the Stanegate road in relation to the forts and fortlets along its line; the purpose of Hadrian's Wall and associated structures; and the planning of the locations of forts and fortlets along the Antonine Wall. From this selection of conclusions it can be seen that Poulter's work has the potential to throw light on a wide range of major issues of Roman archaeology in northern Britain.

Initially, by studying the course of Dere Street, Poulter came to the conclusion that, for most of its length, the road was set out as a series of long-distance planning alignments, some of which related to prominent landmarks. Though these alignments set the overall direction of the road, deviations to both sides occurred to take account of local features. In a few locations, for example in the Cheviot Hills, Poulter could find no evidence for such planning lines. Poulter argues that, having established the long-distance planning alignments, a separate exercise of setting out the detailed route of the road was carried out. The books consider both the planning of the long-distance alignments and the final setting out of the route.

Poulter believes that the direction in which the setting out was carried out can be determined by considering the field of view at the turning points between the alignments. Though one may have a naïve impression that Roman roads change direction at the tops of hills, Poulter observed that in many cases the view from the summit of a hill is restricted and that the road changed direction either before or after the summit at a location in which there was a good view of the near, middle and far ground in one direction. Poulter developed the hypothesis, therefore, that on approaching a hill, Roman surveyors continued on their existing alignment across the top of the hill until a point was reached where they could see ahead the near, middle and far ground, at which point they set out the new alignment. The direction of planning can thus be determined by visiting the locations of the changes in direction and observing which direction provides the best forward view. Poulter emphasises that establishing the direction of the best forward view can only be determined in the field and cannot be reliably determined from maps. In addition to assessing the field of view, Poulter also developed other indicators that he used to determine the direction in which the Roman surveyors were working. Roman surveyors were sufficiently skilled not to be restricted to this approach and so the method for determining the direction of setting out is a hypothesis. Poulter argues that it is justified as the directions that are abstracted do not appear to be random but seem to provide consistent results. Having developed his method of analysis on Dere Street, Poulter has successfully applied it to Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall.

As acknowledged by Poulter, there was no single approach to setting out Dere Street. Though for much of the length considered long-distance alignments seem to have been used, it would appear that through the Cheviot Hills a simpler approach was adopted of setting out as the road progressed, due to the topography. Thus, the reviewers believe that one should not try to establish a single approach used in setting out Roman roads and Walls. Instead we should be looking for a suite of methods that are appropriate to different circumstances.

Poulter's concept of long-distance alignments is attractive, though the definition of some of the long-distance alignments appears arbitrary at times. What Poulter does not do, which needs to be done, is to indicate how the detailed planning of roads and Walls was integrated into the regional understanding of the topography of the area that the Romans clearly had. It is clear from the Roman development of Britain that very soon (or even before the Roman invasion) they had a detailed understanding of the topography of Britain, as is demonstrated by the locations of both Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall.

It is not clear to the reviewers, however, whether Poulter's concept of direction of planning is meaningful. The background of the reviewers is in the area of present-day engineering and surveying which gives us some knowledge of present practices in planning and surveying linear engineering works. Commonly, when planning such types of structure, a route corridor is developed which is then gradually refined over many visits during which the potential route is traversed in both directions. That a similar type of approach was probably used by the Romans is acknowledged by Poulter himself. In these circumstances, the selection of the final route arises from an integration of information gleaned during a number of visits, traversing the proposed route in both directions. Thus, if this were the approach adopted by the Romans, the concept of a 'direction of planning' ceases to have any meaning. Whatever the concerns of the reviewers, it has to be acknowledged that Poulter's results on direction of planning are internally consistent.

Having developed his approach on the planning of Dere Street, Poulter then applied his concepts to the planning of Hadrian's Wall. On much of the length he identified long-distance alignments and directions of planning. In considering the line that Hadrian's Wall takes he identified other potential routes for some lengths, usually to the north of the adopted line, and concluded that these other lines were not adopted in order to retain a view from the Wall to the south. There then follows a discussion about the purpose of Hadrian's Wall. Most of those who have seen or read about Hadrian's Wall have speculated about its purpose, and this is a topic that is central to discussing the planning of the Wall. Poulter's discussion of the purpose of Hadrian's Wall concurs with the work of Woolliscroft on signalling but, otherwise, does not seem to rely on the extensive literature on the subject or to take full account of the information available on the context of Hadrian's Wall, its archaeology and the parallels with other Roman frontier systems. Surely any discussion of the purpose of Hadrian's Wall needs to synthesise the information from all sources.

Having studied Hadrian's Wall, Poulter turned his attention to the Antonine Wall. In contrast to what he had found on Hadrian's Wall, Poulter could find no evidence for long-distance alignments. Instead he suggested that the setting out lines for the Antonine Wall were from one point to another which were, in the main, intervisible. Poulter found that where the line of the Antonine Wall changed direction, the fields of view were often equally good in both directions. Where Poulter could identify directions of planning they were not consistent as they appeared to run for a few kilometres and then change direction. On the Antonine Wall many of the northern ramparts of many of the forts and fortlets line up with

the line of the wall. From studying the relationship between the line of the Wall and these northern ramparts, and taking into account problems of communication, Poulter concluded that the locations of the main military installations along the Antonine Wall were set out prior to the planning of the line of the frontier. He suggests that a signalling chain along the line of the Antonine Wall might have been created first, before the construction of the Wall itself. As with the discussion of Hadrian's Wall, Poulter does not seem to take fully into account other work on the Antonine Wall, particularly the archaeology. This must mean that any conclusions should be regarded as provisional.

The impression created in the minds of the reviewers is that the approach of identifying long-distance planning alignments and directions of planning seems to be inadequate for explaining the features of the Antonine Wall. Poulter's response is to state that 'the line of the Antonine Wall does not appear to have been the work of a single team of surveyors', which seems to be an inadequate explanation of the apparent lack of consistency in the directions of setting out. Poulter seems to have missed an opportunity to point out that the use of long-distance alignments is one approach to setting out linear structures and that other approaches might have been used by the Romans depending upon the nature of the structure, its purpose, and the topography to be traversed.

The suggestion by Poulter that setting out the Antonine Wall was not the work of a single team of surveyors raises an issue in connection with Dere Street and Hadrian's Wall. It would seem inherently unlikely that such long features were set out by only one team of surveyors. An alternative approach might have been to use a number of survey teams under some central control but with discretion to solve local problems. One would expect the long-distance alignments and major deviations to have been fixed at an early stage. The setting out of these major structures is a great tribute to the skill of the Roman surveyors who used the instruments and methods available to them with great ability.

Overall, Poulter's work is important in raising the challenging topic of how Roman features such as roads and Walls were planned and set out. His work also illustrates that such topic can provide useful additional information for unravelling central issues to do with the purpose and use of these structures. We believe that in the future people will look back to Poulter's work as the first, innovative step of a new branch of study. We would expect, however, that many of his ideas will be developed and refined in the future. The Amberley volume provides the more general overview of the work of Poulter, whilst the BAR Report provides detailed descriptions of the work carried out on Dere Street, Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall.

F. and R. Bettess

David J. Breeze, *The Frontiers of Imperial Rome* (Pen and Sword, Barnsley, 2011), pp. 242, 48 illus., 28 colour pl. ISBN 978-1-84884-427-8. £25.

Previous English-language accounts of the Roman frontiers have usually been written from the perspectives of the ancient historian, relying primarily on texts. Our former President set himself what in some ways was a harder task in describing and analysing the physical remains of these military works and their landscapes while also outlining the historical background to their development over half of a millennium. The result, well-illustrated and accompanied by a comprehensive bibliography, will surely become the standard introduction to Roman frontier studies for all levels of interest.

The second and largest of the three parts into which the book is divided is a gazetteer of frontiers arranged thematically — linear (artificial), river, desert, mountain, and sea frontiers — rather than in geographic succession. It is the fruit of countless visits by the author to the frontier zones. The only difficulties apparent to a British student of frontiers are close to home, on the Saxon Shore. The fort at Caister-on-Sea is omitted from the map, on which Branchester is spelt 'Branchester', and there is no mention of the Carausian date for Pevensey indicated by coins and dendrochronology, first noted in 1995 and now fully published. In the broad sweep of the gazetteer, these are minor matters. The first part of the book is an analysis of the literary and epigraphic sources, where the author has an unerring eye for what is really important. The third part draws together archaeology and history in a wide-ranging discussion of the possible purposes and actual functions of frontier works, which have been much debated since the 1960s. Due regard is given to theories which see the artificial barriers — walls, palisades and chains of towers and forts — as largely symbolic or concerned with the regulation of civilian traffic and the collection of customs dues. The author's views are clearly stated: these works 'were not designed to stop a major invasion', but were built for less ambitious military purposes, preventing the depredations of raiders and exercising absolute control over who or what entered or left the empire. Treaties could grant access to the frontier provinces to those beyond the *limes* and encourage trade by authorising the holding of markets; sanctions could close the frontier not only to people but to the export of Roman goods.

Many readers of this journal will ask how Hadrian's Wall fits into this picture. Uniquely elaborate in its construction and held by the largest concentration of forces on any frontier (apart from on its short-lived substitute in Scotland), it has been thought of by some, going back to Mommsen, as a defensive fortification devised to confront intractable problems not encountered on other frontiers. For the author, the exceptional nature of the Wall is rather to be explained by the involvement of Hadrian himself in its original conception and some of its ensuing details (an argument developed in *AA*⁵, 38, 87–103). But two centuries or more after Hadrian, his Wall, though much reduced from its original specifications, still remained the most formidable and strongly-manned frontier work in the empire. Inertia or respect for its originator are unlikely reasons for its survival. It seems that the problems it was built to counter lasted into the twilight of Roman Britain.

Paul Bidwell

David Petts and Sam Turner (eds.) *Early Medieval Northumbria: Kingdoms and Communities, AD 450–1100* (Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, Belgium. *Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, 24, 2012), pp. xiv + 332, 72 illus. ISBN 978 2 503 52822 9. € 115.

This is a valuable collection of 15 essays, based on papers given to a 1996 conference in Newcastle. Such collections can lack coherence but what strikingly emerges from the contributors to this volume, each concerned with different forms of evidence, is a common emphasis on variation within early medieval Northumbria. Such variation is not just a matter of geography — lands to the east and west of the Pennines, Deira versus Bernicia — nor of period. What is uncovered here is a fascinating variety within sub-regions and within individual communities, reflecting differing (and changing) methods of signalling identities, hierarchies, gender and ideologies.

After a scene-setting chapter by the editors, Rob Collins reviews the archaeological evidence for post-400 occupation of sites in the military zone and argues for a continued sense

of shared identity along Hadrian's Wall, and for a model in which the *limitanei* formed a regionally distinct 'occupational community' in the fourth century which then evolved into sub-Roman communities around an elite warband. This is followed by a very important paper by Mark Wood examining place-name evidence in relation to archaeological material in early Bernicia. The place-names of Durham and Northumberland have long been neglected and Wood's study usefully brings out such issues as the variant processes of language change in different areas of the North East, the limited concentrations of Anglian names, and the seeming fragmentation of the region into small territories. This material is difficult to map, and the small scale of his figures here is not helpful in this regard, but his article whets the appetite for a fuller publication of the thesis on which this summary is based.

The late Richard Hall then provides a characteristically lucid summary of recent research into early medieval York and its hinterland, and this is followed by two papers dealing with Northumbria west of the Pennines. In the first, Nicola Toop uses stone sculptural evidence to demonstrate that, in the fifth and sixth centuries, the Machars and Rhinns peninsulas were essentially a maritime (Irish Sea) oriented society with a stable elite of Whithorn at its centre; whatever Christian belief was present in contemporary Cumbria and Dumfriesshire, it did not invest in similar monuments. By contrast, Anglian stone carvings, reflecting later Northumbrian expansion, are limited to Cumbria and the lands east of the Nith whose valley represents a monumental and ideological frontier. Beyond lay Whithorn, whose first Anglian bishop, Pecthelm, may represent an isolated Northumbrian political bridgehead. The second 'western' paper, by Felicity Clarke, contains some penetrating observations on the Wilfridian acquisition of lands in the west and on other indications in the *Vita Wilfridi* of local communities formulating new identities.

Julian Richards and John Naylor report on the contribution of portable antiquities, including coinage finds, to our understanding of the north, relating their material to Brian Robert's identification of 'cultural cores' and emphasising how the major economic and communications networks of early medieval Europe did not go much further north than York and Whitby. That distinction between Deira and areas to the north of the Tees is echoed by Aleksandra McClain in her study of Late Saxon/ Norman patronage of sculpture and church-building; rebuilding in Durham and Northumberland, for example, was much less extensive than in north Yorkshire. Later in the volume Christopher Ferguson, in a fascinating paper examining the 'coastal highway' of Northumbria (which forces us to re-think Yarm, Ripon and York as coastal sites and review our concept of 'far-flung' contacts), makes a similar distinction: York and the Humber display long-lasting economic interchange with the lands around the North Sea basin, whilst in north Northumbria these links are less consistent and mainly reflect late seventh and early eighth-century monastic communities.

The second part of the book concentrates on identities and material culture. It begins with a breezily engaging paper by Martin Carver uncovering 'a patchwork of opinions' across the region, whose groupings do not readily map onto administrative or ancestral territories. This is followed by three papers on Yeavering and Bamburgh. Colm O'Brien acknowledges that Brian Hope-Taylor's claims that the excavated structures at Yeavering betray a hybrid Anglian/Brittonic culture is no longer tenable, but convincingly claims that in its burials, cult practice and inherited territorial structures his analysis was correct. Similarly drawing on Hope-Taylor's work, Jenny Walker, in post-processual mode, examines the changing special organisation of buildings at Yeavering and Doon Hill to argue for a society increasingly concerned with status. The important excavations at Bowl Hole, Bamburgh, provide Sarah

Groves with a rich range of skeletal material to reveal, within the same cemetery, variety in burial practice reflecting age, gender and social position. Finally, Steven Ashby takes the unpromising subject of hair combs to track geographical variations in form and structure.

Michelle Brown's article on manuscripts may, at first sight, seem divorced from the themes asserted and echoed in the other chapters. But here again, detailed investigation of pigments and scribal procedures reveals individuality, variation and connections which, through monastic *paruchia* links, reach far beyond secular territorial boundaries.

This is, then, a wide-ranging volume. One would have welcomed a clearer introductory statement of topographical constraints on agriculture, and more on church and territorial organisations. But these are minor quibbles. Much more of a problem is the price of the book, which will sadly deny it to the very audience it envisages.

Richard N. Bailey

Henry Summerson, *Edward I at Carlisle: King and Parliament in 1307* (Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Tract Series, 23, 2011), pp. 52, 15 illus. ISBN 978 1 87312454 3. £7.50.

This very readable booklet provides a window on an extraordinary event in the history of Carlisle, the four months in 1307 that Edward I spent in the city, 'the only occasion when it occupied a central position . . . in British affairs.' The king, old and frail, had intended to travel into Scotland to suppress the rebellion under Robert the Bruce but he never did so. The effect of his stay on Carlisle and the surrounding area was dramatic, for the arrival of parliament and of the king's entourage probably brought in over 2000 people, doubling the population and drawing supplies from as far afield as Corbridge and Newcastle. Summerson provides an authoritative description of the king's life in the city and of his final painful journey to his death on Burgh Marsh.

Humphrey Welfare

Richard Britnell, Claire Etty, and Andy King (eds. and trans.) *The Black Book of Hexham: A Northern Monastic Estate in 1379, with Additional Documents c.1113–1536* (Hexham Local History Society, Occasional Publications, 11, 2011), pp. x + 299, 3 maps. ISBN 978 0 9565078 2 2, £30 (hardback); 978 0 9565078 3 9, £18 (paperback).

The Black Book of Hexham contains a detailed survey of the temporal estates of Hexham Priory that often constitutes the single most important source for the social, economic and landscape history of the areas it describes. These are not confined to North East: the Priory's estates were concentrated in Tynedale, but it also had significant holdings elsewhere in the North. A text long familiar to specialists (though arguably under-exploited), it is here translated into English in full from the original Latin, making it widely accessible for the first time. Chapter 2 sets out the editorial conventions used in the translation and also the difficult editorial decisions involved in its preparation. Strictly speaking, the translation is not of the Black Book itself but rather of the younger James Raine's edition of 1865, for the only known manuscript, in private ownership, has been lost since the 1950s. (If any landowners are still reluctant to involve professional archivists in the care of their historic estate documents this chilling fact will surely dispel any residual misgivings.) Raine's edition has been collated with partial transcripts by John Hodgson (largely contained in his manuscript collections in this Society's possession), from which it is clear that it has shortcomings (occasionally

demonstrable, more often suspected), particularly when judged by modern editorial standards. But we should never underestimate Raine's achievement, as the editors of the present volume are only too well aware.

Typographical errors are few, though the editorial footnotes contain more than their fair share. There are also very occasional slips in quoting Raine's text (e.g. on p. 54 'Vieuxpont' is clearly what was meant, but 'Vepon't' is what Raine actually prints); none will seriously mislead the reader, however. The process of translation has thrown up problems of interpretation and internal textual inconsistencies (all carefully flagged in the footnotes), many of which would probably have gone undetected on a casual perusal of the Latin (e.g. p. 37, notes 133–4, 136–7). Some may be resolved by conjecturing emendations (e.g. p. 122, note 342); yet, even where no solution suggests itself, identification of the problems still makes a significant scholarly contribution to our critical understanding of the text. (This reviewer can offer assistance with only one query: the unidentified nunnery (p. 146, note 403) is surely Nunburnholme in eastern Yorkshire.)

All translations beg the question of the intended audience. Those who have no Latin at all may use this translation with confidence as a clear, reliable and acceptable rendering. But those with some Latin, who may wish to use it as an aid to understanding the original rather than as a substitute for it, are less well served by some of the editorial and translation decisions. For example, while the translation is much easier to navigate than Raine's text due to editorial relocation of misplaced sub-headings, insertion of missing ones, and collation of duplicated passages (see pp. 133–40), that also makes it harder to relate the English and Latin texts. (Printing marginal cross-references to Raine's pagination would have helped in this regard.) The same is true when the word order of the English departs from that of the Latin for no obvious reason, or when, as happens occasionally, Latin words are left silently untranslated; these choices may well make perfectly good sense in their particular contexts but they all tend to obscure the relation between English and Latin. Translating the same Latin word by different English ones (e.g. *firma* may be rendered as 'lease' or as 'farm') may also serve to confuse.

Additional editorial support for non-specialist readers might also have been considered, such as supplying calendar dates for fixed feast-days, converting marks into £ s d (p. 53), explaining the (not infrequent) references to obedientiaries, and translating technical terms (e.g. 'garb', 'agistment', 'stirk') that are otherwise likely to be stumbling-blocks. The unwary reader might also perhaps have been issued with the customary warning as to the ambiguities arising from the lack of semantic markers for the definite and indefinite article in Latin, leading to seeming inconsistencies of translation (e.g. p. 46, why '*the* brewery', but '*a* water mill?'). In the overall scheme of things, however, these are minor quibbles: the translation is a substantial achievement in its own right and for this alone we are all very much in the editors' debt.

But the volume contains a great deal more besides. There is a substantial calendar of additional documents which takes up more space than the translation of the Black Book itself. Some of these were also printed or extracted by Raine in an appendix to his edition, but he was inevitably unaware of others. The vast majority are already in print, but it is wonderfully convenient to have them assembled here, with up-to-date bibliography and summaries of dating evidence. Together they constitute a conspectus of the source materials for a full history of the Priory's estates, putting the Black Book into context (and, incidentally, highlighting a number of disconcerting apparent omissions from it: e.g. pp. 207 (no. 29), 214

(no. 40)). Further, all the places mentioned in the Black Book are listed, together with appropriate cross-references to the calendared documents, producing in effect a potted history of the Priory's holdings in 1379, location by location (pp. 239–70). Users can find their way from the variant name-forms of the original (and rightly preserved in the translation) to their modern equivalents via a gazetteer (pp. 275–82) and there is also a useful general index. All identifiable sites are plotted on three admirably clear maps. Finally, an introductory chapter concisely outlines the history of the estate and explains the agricultural practices, forms of tenure, and tenorial obligations encountered in the Black Book. This essay is a model of its kind, deftly sketching in the wider context of the text while also noting its evidential limitations.

This book began as a 'bottom-up' initiative from the Hexham Local History Society. In the event the 'project in search of three editors' has surely delivered far more than the Society could have hoped for; its own vision, and the editors' skill in realising it, alike deserve our warmest congratulations. We must hope that the real rewards will be yet to come, as this publication stimulates a new wave of interest in, and research into, the past landscapes and societies that the Black Book so vividly evokes. To start with, at just £18 there is no excuse for it failing to find its way into the Christmas stocking of every landowner and farmer in Tynedale.

Finally, it is to be hoped that the Augustinians of Hexham dealt more kindly with the population of their estates than the Benedictine monk whose rapacity is satirised in the cover illustration; the fact that the Black Book records that the Priory derived no rent from two of its tenements in Newcastle because no-one knew where they were (p. 115) suggests that, if anything, the canons had leaned rather too far the other way.

Eric Cambridge

Joseph M. Fewster, *The Keelmen of Tyneside: Labour Organisation and Conflict in the North-East Coal Industry, 1600–1830* (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2011), pp. x + 222, 4 illus. ISBN 978 1 84383 632 2. £60.

A deal of resolve is required to return to a specialized local subject after a publication gap of over fifty years, and the author has clearly worked to good purpose during the intervening decades. Whether the resultant volume proves definitive only time will tell, but it undoubtedly sets a high standard in respect of source material consulted, whilst the prolonged research probably encouraged serendipity too.

Playing a crucial supply-side role in the complex transport and transaction chains that comprised Newcastle's all pervasive 'coal trade', the keelmen of Tyneside formed a recognisably coherent, if already fractious, body of labour from the early seventeenth century onwards, with a solidarity of watermanship that reached back into prior eras. Their utility became a constant, for until the early nineteenth century the Tyneside's fleet of keels formed the only economically viable link between coal producers and seagoing shipping — a tidally-powered conveyor belt always vulnerable to disruption.

The book's introduction and initial chapter, the first of seventeen, deals competently and informatively with such early matters, including the practicalities of the river's specialised watercraft, the statutorily measured keel: a 21-ton (burthen) coal lighter. It then veers away from a simple chronological approach to indulge in a three-chapter long, thematic description of the keelmen's 'charities' that severally existed from 1699 through to 1898, detailing the

origins, administration, control, frustrations and decline of each one. Fascinating historical argument and social detail emerges during this 'charitable' diversion but, especially for the first-time reader, much significance may be lost through lack of context. The importance of the interrelated power-plays that surrounded these charities is revealed only in the light of what follows, that is in the work's core content, a comprehensive and chronologically arranged account of those aspects of 'labour organisation and conflict' that affected Tyne-side's keelmen and their 'masters' from the early eighteenth century onwards.

For the period between 1710 and 1822, during which time the Tyne's coal shipments grew exponentially, Fewster lists and critically examines no less than fourteen formal work stoppages by the keelmen, delineating their ostensible causes, the responses of the men's immediate employers (the 'fitters': the coal trade's exclusive middlemen) and the reactions of civil governance and the military authorities. There is detailed comment on the evolution, resolution, outcome and — most importantly — the unresolved legacies of successive disruptions. And central to these conflict scenarios lay the annually-bonded keelmen — paid in cash and kind under manipulative piecework rules by 'the tide' — whose individual crews (three men and a boy) possessed little bargaining power. Conversely, the concerted strike action of a thousand or so of these collective workers, bound by factors of occupation, geography, culture and lusty physicality, provided the potential to redress grievances — real or perceived. Sadly, it is hard to discern any decisive evolution of negotiation protocols between men and masters, the former continuing to be held in productive thrall to the unchanging medieval keel and the commercial elite's rigid concept of labour hierarchy. Unsurprisingly, keel transport finally succumbed catastrophically — faster even than previously suggested by Rowe — under the impact of steam towage, direct loading devices, and an overdue conservancy shift. By the late 1850s keel usage was effectively defunct.

Sustained by an overwhelming body of original evidence, Fewster elaborates his chosen themes with sophistication and historical cogency. Nevertheless, the final chapter, seeking to vindicate the book's opening argument that the keelmen's struggle 'provides a particularly good example of embryonic trade unionism', is not convincingly closed out. Overall, the volume is a valuable one within the specific remit of the commissioning body's 'Regions and Regionalism in History' series, but at such a price purchasers should not be faced with poorly reproduced and tired illustrations, or an absence of pertinent maps.

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