

## 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.*

Nick Hodgson, Jonathan McKelvey and Warren Muncaster, *The Iron Age on the Northumbrian Coastal Plain. Excavations in advance of development 2002–2010*. Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Monograph, 3 (TWM Archaeology and the Arbeia Society, Newcastle 2102), pp. xi + 231, 107 illus, 24 tables. ISBN 0 905974 90 5. £19.95.

It is in the nature of archaeology, as in so many disciplines, that a research topic can lie dormant for many years before bursting once again into full flower. In the 1960s and '70s, the results of aerial photography, taken by Norman McCord and others, had stimulated a series of excavations by George Jobey into the late prehistoric settlements of the coastal plain in Northumberland. He published his last paper on the subject (on Doubstead) in 1982, and although there was further progress in Scotland and in County Durham, the best part of a generation rolled by before the appearance of Jenny Proctor's important reports on the excavations at Pegswood Moor (in 2009) and at the Needles Eye, near Berwick (2012), and of this book by Hodgson, McKelvey, and Muncaster.

A significant milestone, it provides the results of excavations into later prehistoric sites all within 8 km of one another in SE Northumberland, to the W of Cramlington and to the N of Gosforth. The sites were those of enclosed settlements at Blagdon Park, and at East and West Brunton (Newcastle Great Park), the later prehistoric occupation at Shotton, and of pit alignments at Blagdon, Shotton, and Horton Grange. A dense distribution of such sites can now be mapped (fig. 99) but it is sobering to reflect that most of the archaeological features treated here were quite unknown and were only revealed by speculative excavation in advance of development. Thus, in addition to the familiar rectilinear settlements, 'an invisible landscape of minor and unenclosed Iron Age sites as well as a system of late-Bronze Age or early-Iron Age land division must be assumed to exist ...' A sophisticated level of community cohesion and consensus, extending back into the Bronze Age, will have been a precondition for this density and complexity.

Nick Hodgson's wide-ranging and well-balanced chapter of General Conclusions is an extremely valuable statement for the archaeology of the North East. There are informed observations and intelligent speculation on the form of the buildings encountered in the settlements; on the placing of querns and cup-marked stones; the importance of display; the variations in crop husbandry; and on social structures and estimates of population. Inevitably, the debate about the impact of Rome commands a certain amount of attention. Hodgson propounds the intriguing and very plausible theory that the Trajanic frontier ran along the Stanegate and thence NE along the Devil's Causeway to the mouth of the Tweed. (This might put the fortlet at Longshaw into much the same category as sites such as Castle Hill, Boothby, or Throp.) Closer to Hadrian's Wall, he documents the widespread abandonment of settlement by the mid second century AD, and the likelihood that a ten-mile strip in front of the Wall was deliberately cleared in a move that resulted in 'the disappearance of the Iron Age civilisation of the Northumberland coastal plain.' This emerging picture of a dense settlement pattern, of considerable time-depth, combined with a brutal imposition of military power,

underlines the defensive imperative that made the construction of the Roman frontier necessary and effective.

Humphrey Welfare

C. Maddern, *Raising the Dead. Early Medieval Name Stones in Northumbria*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 38 (Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 2013), pp. xviii+306, 38 illus. ISBN 978-2-503-53218-9. £85.

This is a useful book. Its subject is the so-called name stones of Northumbria, small slabs carrying incised or relief crosses which are often accompanied by runic or Latin capital inscriptions. Their occurrence is limited to the Northumbrian monastic sites of Lindisfarne, Hartlepool, Monkwearmouth, Birtley, and Billingham, together with a later example at Wensley, in Yorkshire. Earlier studies, several of which appeared in our journal, have been concerned with issues of date and, crucially, the positioning and function of the stones in relation to burials. These questions have not proved easy to answer, not least because most of the stones were discovered in a secondary position or, where they were found *in situ* at Hartlepool, the nineteenth-century records are confusing and contradictory.

Christine Maddern attempts a broader approach. Whilst grappling with the problems of chronology and positioning, she invokes the socio-historical, theological and liturgical contexts in which the stones were produced to argue that, 'if they were used as grave markers, such use would have been secondary to their memorial function in stimulating prayer and indicating adherence to the resurrection theology of the time'. *En route* to this conclusion she makes some significant points: the evidence, for example, of variation in burial rituals, the hitherto-unnoticed survival of painted surfaces, and the possibility of changes in apocalyptic expectations in c. 800 leading to a cessation of name stone usage, and the close parallels in size, layout and script with insular gospel books. She also provides an exhaustive survey of insular and continental parallels in her search for potential influences on the form and original location of these carvings. All of this is supported by excellent line drawings and photographs.

The majority of the book is devoted to an examination of the background to the sculptures in the liturgy (notably in prayers for the dead), and in contemporary concepts of the Apocalypse and Last Judgement. It is here, in the disentangling of complex sources and in her survey of the present state of scholarship, that the book may well prove to be of most value to students. Given the fragmentary nature of the evidence however, these are not easy topics to summarise and, possibly because of these problems, not all of the material invoked seems directly relevant to an understanding of the stones. The final chapter on iconography has similar strengths and weaknesses: it makes perceptive observations on the implications of alpha and omega symbols and the multiple layers of significance embodied in the form of the cross, but also contains sections — such as those on evangelist symbolism and the Agnus Dei — whose immediate relevance to interpretation of the name stones is far from clear.

In summary, this study provides a thoughtful, far-ranging, and much-needed study of a distinctive group of early Northumbrian carvings. Whilst it would have benefitted from a more intrusive editorial intervention in its organisation, Dr Maddern is to be congratulated on opening up a new approach to our understanding of these stones.

Richard N. Bailey

Martin Roberts, *The Buildings and Landscapes of Durham University* (Third Millennium Publishing and Durham University, 2013), pp. 160. ISBN 978 1 908990 16 7. £15.

This book, the first to describe the many buildings of Durham University, is a fine piece of work, a credit to the University, author, illustrators, and publishers. Good paper, fine design, clear layout, index and footnotes make it very easy to use — despite the modest claim that it is 'not a work of reference but a personal selection of what is best and extraordinary in Durham University'.

Illustrated by excellent photographs and historical drawings and plans, the book tells how the University occupied the Castle and many old buildings on the peninsula, students arriving in 1833, and the grant of a royal charter in 1837. New colleges appeared in the surrounding landscape and beyond. Meanwhile, in 1852 the School of Medicine, and in 1871 the School of Physical Science, were founded at Newcastle under Durham's auspices; in 1937 these became Kings College, and in 1963 the University of Newcastle. In Durham, new college buildings were showcases for twentieth-century styles, many illustrated here by architects' drawings.

After 1945, plans were drawn up to allow much-needed expansion. The university's core spread over the River Wear into Elvet. Ove Arup's brilliant Kingsgate Bridge of 1962–3 linked the new with the old: two concrete halves built on opposite banks were swung through ninety degrees to form a crossing. The story follows the post-war years, with all their changes of fashion in materials and styles, when new colleges, science- and sports-blocks around Durham were designed to respect distant views of the city, and then goes further out to look at the Gothic Revival buildings of the Pugin practice and of Dunn & Hansom at Ushaw College, and the 1980s buildings at Stockton's Queen's Campus.

The descriptions of the University buildings are skillfully woven into the history of the ancient city and the surrounding landscape, described not as mere objects in the landscape, rather as the wrappings for the business of the university.

By commissioning distinguished architects (such as Antony Salvin, Vincent Harris, George Pace, Francis Johnson, William Whitfield, Spence, Glover & Ferguson, and Faulkner Brown), and by paying heed to the needs of the historic setting of their buildings, the University has added great architecture to its own corpus and has considerably enhanced the city. This book does justice to all. It may not be intended as a work of reference but it will become one, not just for the dates of buildings and the names of their architects, but also for the accounts of their history and their context. It is a demonstration of the relationship of people to places, of society to its constructions and, most of all, of the individual buildings to the University itself, the careful devising of appropriate rooms and spaces, buildings and landscapes: the whole captivating Durham University.

Grace McCombie

