

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.

Anne S. Robertson, *The Antonine Wall. A Handbook to Scotland's Roman Frontier*, rev. and ed. Lawrence Keppie (Glasgow Archaeological Society, 2015), pp. 143, 76 illus. ISBN 978 0 902018 14 3. £9.50 (Postage £1.00).

The publication of a new edition of handbook to a well-loved monument is always eagerly anticipated. In this case, we are not disappointed. This is the third edition of *The Antonine Wall* which Keppie has edited, the first three being written by Robertson who published her first in 1960. Keppie remains faithful to the original concept. So what is new about this edition?

The most visible changes are obvious from the cover. On the front is the new logo of the Antonine Wall World Heritage Site, achieved in 2008, while the front and back covers are adorned by colour photographs, which herald the use of colour throughout.

Turning to the contents, we note new sections, on 'The contemporary Iron Age', 'The environment of the Wall', 'The Roman army on the Wall', 'Temporary camps', 'Excavation and survey' and 'The awarding of World Heritage Site status', with the discussion of the distance slabs accorded separate treatment. New evidence, such as the pits on the berm (pp.20–22), receive appropriate treatment, while there is a new plan of the fort at Falkirk (p.65) and a description and plan of the fort of Camelton and comment on Arthur's O' on just to the north of the Wall (pp.67–9).

The colour photographs are carefully chosen to illustrate all elements of the monument, including the Antonine Wall's unique contribution to Roman military sculpture, the distance slabs. Here, however, Keppie also helpfully continues to include Margaret Scott's excellent drawings of the most important stones. The use of colour has allowed the reproduction of the 1902 drawing of a cross-section through the wall at Bar Hill (p.93). A further new feature is the inclusion of a geophysical survey, of Balmuildy, while the results of geophysical surveys elsewhere are described as appropriate.

The bibliography is considerably extended from previous editions, and with two new helpful features. Unusually, the entries in the general section are arranged chronologically rather than alphabetically, the advantage being that this indicates how the student of the Wall might trace the history of thought on the frontier. The second part continues to be organised by site, but here the change is to introduce sections on the lengths of Wall in between. The helpful lists of museums, the best places to see the Wall and the sites in state care are retained, but with the addition of a list of relevant websites.

The handbook contains eight maps, all black-and-white with no physical features indicated. The latter would certainly help the reader to appreciate the location of the Antonine Wall in its landscape while the former sits somewhat strangely with the colourful aspect of the rest of the book. A further minor point is that the plans of the various structures on the Wall are not reproduced to a basic series of scales. This would not matter so much if the comparative plans of forts and of fortlets had not been omitted.

The editor of a handbook of some antiquity is faced with a difficult choice between retaining the earlier text — and illustrations — and up-dating appropriately. In this task, Keppie is

aided by the text of Anne Robertson who always weighed her words with care. Keppie offers a similar judicial treatment of the evidence. This serves the reader well. At but one point did I consider that a little more might have been said. Keppie's discussion of how the Antonine Wall was 'finished off' at the top (p. 18), follows closely the account offered by Robertson. The assumption is that there was a wall-walk along the top of the rampart. Here a hint that there is a continuing discussion about the form of the top of the British frontiers might have been appropriate.

Keppie has retained two versions of the plan of the fort and fortlet at Duntocher excavated and subsequently published by Robertson. Perhaps this is pietas, but unfortunately Robertson offered two versions of the plan of the fortlet. In one (Robertson 1957, 20, fig. 5) the fortlet is shown with both southern external corners rounded (and argued as such in the discussion: pp. 17–8), but in her general plans (figs. 4, 21 and 22) the corners are right-angles, and these are the plans which are generally reproduced, as here. Rounded corners are normal and would imply that the fortlet was intended to stand alone; squared corners would suggest that the builders anticipated the addition of a fort at the site. The corners are therefore of some significance.

These are small points in relation to the whole. Keppie has done those interested in the archaeology of Britain proud. The book deserves to be on the shelf of all interested in the Romans in Britain and in the pocket of those intent on exploring the monument in the field, while the Glasgow Archaeological Society deserves our thanks for maintaining its commitment to Rome's North-West Frontier.

REFERENCE

ROBERTSON, A. S. 1957 *An Antonine Fort, An account of excavations carried out on the Antonine Wall and fort on Golden Hill Duntocher, Dunbartonshire*, Edinburgh and London.

David J. Breeze

David J. Breeze, *Bearsden: A Roman Fort on the Antonine Wall* (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Edinburgh 2016) pp. xxxii + 405, 276 illus. ISBN 978 1 90833 208 0. £30.

This handsome volume represents the full publication of the substantial programme of rescue and research excavation undertaken at Bearsden Roman fort from 1973 to 1982. These excavations, directed by the principal author, David Breeze, as Inspector of Ancient Monuments, uncovered the majority of the northern part of the fort and annexe, plus a significant proportion of the fort's southern half, making the site one of the most extensively investigated of the Antonine Wall forts.

The excavators confronted a number of problems resulting from the construction of several Victorian villas over the site. Floor levels rarely survived and Roman features were compressed beneath clay dumps associated with 19th-century terracing, making postholes more difficult to identify. Nevertheless much was revealed, including a headquarters building with a possible forehall, two granaries, two barrack blocks, a possible storehouse and other long narrow structures which were more difficult to assign a function to. Particularly noteworthy were the bath-house and associated latrine revealed in the fort annexe, which were placed in state care in 1982. Unusually, most buildings were constructed of timber with only the granaries, bath-house and latrine being stone-built.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the fort was the division of the original fort enclosure by a cross-wall, with the eastern third being transformed into an annexe. Although this was not part of the fort's primary layout, Breeze demonstrates that this occurred at an early stage, whilst construction of the internal building was still underway, and, judging from the structural similarities between the buildings of Bearsden 1 and 2, was effected by the same body of troops. It was perhaps associated with the overall reorganisation of forts and garrisons which occurred when the number of forts along the Wall was increased.

The identity of the garrison is unknown, but Breeze suggests that cavalry formed at least part of it, based on the recognition of eight *contubernia* in each barrack block, supported by the possible existence of a forehall fronting the headquarters. However no characteristic pits or drains to collect or discharge the horses' urine were recognised in the Bearsden *contubernia*, in contrast to sites like Wallsend where definitive examples of cavalry barracks have been excavated. Moreover, based on evidence from Birdoswald and Wallsend respectively, both Wilmott and Hodgson have cast doubt on the association of forehalls with cavalry, challenging the earlier identification with *basilica equestris exercitatoria*, and envisaging forehalls instead as covered ceremonial assembly spaces, so this question should perhaps remain open.

The specialist reports are a major feature of the report, amplifying our understanding of life in the fort. A substantial pottery assemblage was recovered, representing around one fifth of the total material recovered from the Antonine Wall forts. This revealed a considerable proportion of the coarseware was made locally, presumably outside the fort, including a workshop of Sarrius producing mortaria. Analysis of the botanical remains preserved in the sewage discharged from the latrine into the east annexe ditches provided important evidence for the diet of the troops. The latest stratified coinage dated to 154/155, falling into the now recognised pattern suggesting withdrawal from the Antonine barrier and the recommissioning of Hadrian's Wall occurred in the later 150s.

Another distinguishing feature of the volume is the inclusion of numerous, excellent reconstruction drawings by Michael J. Moore, which are not only informative in themselves but also complement the discussion interpreting the construction or function of particular structures, notably the headquarters, barracks and bath-house.

Overall, the volume is well-organised, copiously illustrated, much in colour, with ample cogent discussion, consistent with the high standard we have come to expect from the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, and forms an important addition to the corpus of published work on the Antonine Wall.

Alan Rushworth

Alan Rushworth and Alexandra Croom, *Segedunum. Excavations by Charles Daniels in the Roman Fort at Wallsend (1975–1984), Volume 1: The Structural Remains; Volume 2: The Finds* (Oxbow, Oxford & Philadelphia, 2016). 841 pp., numerous illustrations, index. Hardback ISBN 9781785700262. Digital edition 9781785700279. £55

Wallsend belongs to an exclusive club: it is the most completely excavated fort on Hadrian's Wall and one of only a handful of such forts within the Roman Empire. The investigation started as a rescue excavation in advance of housing developments but North Tyneside Council then decided not to build on the site so that it is now open to the public. That change of heart so moved the goal posts that Charles Daniels did not finish his excavation in that he did not always reach the lowest levels; the task was completed a dozen years later and

published by Nick Hodgson (*The Roman Fort at Wallsend (Segedunum) Excavations in 1997–8*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Tyne & Wear Museums, 2003).

The complications of the two phases of excavations might have resulted in confusion, but Rushworth provides an excellent overview, supported by a definitive series of 10 plans, both old and new. The two most significant phases at the fort are the Hadrianic and the third/fourth century interchange, though we should note that beneath all was found evidence for pre-Roman cultivation.

Daniels was able to produce a plan appropriate for a 500-strong mixed infantry and cavalry unit, the work-horse of the frontier. Six infantry barracks together with two long narrow buildings lay in the forward part of the fort and four cavalry barrack to the rear, in addition to the normal buildings in the central range. It is rare for the archaeological evidence to match the documentary so well and this strengthens the evidence for the regimented nature of Hadrian's Wall. Hodgson's work on two of the barrack-blocks refined the details with evidence for cavalrymen and their horses occupying the two buildings. This itself was one of the most significant excavations in helping to answer the long-running question: where did the Roman army keep its horses.

The plan of the central range was simple, with the headquarters building in the centre, facing north as one might expect, flanked to the right by the commanding officer's house and to the left by two granaries. Changes in the later second century included the construction of a stone hospital set back to the left of the granaries, with water provided by a cistern, and a forehall straddling the road added to the front of the headquarters building and the granaries.

Daniels' interpretation of the plan of the early fourth century fort built on the evidence for 'chalet' barracks first recognised by John Wilkes at Housesteads. At Wallsend, all barracks appeared to have been rebuilt in an entirely different style from their predecessors. This provoked considerable discussion of the occasion and reasons for such radical changes, which continues to this day. As a result of the work by Rushworth and Croom the Daniels' interpretation can be challenged in several aspects.

Rushworth adds a significant point to the debate in that he was unable to recognise any break in the occupation of the fort from the late third into the fourth century. This is of particular importance for Daniels' explanation for the change in barrack style was that the earlier regiment had been withdrawn for service in southern Britain and when it returned the unit moved into the fort together with its womenfolk and children creating accommodation suitable for families. If there was no break in occupation, then the Daniels' suggestion falls. The date of the building of the new-style barracks has also been challenged. Hodgson has brought forward their establishment to the 200s/230s thereby further undermining the Daniels' interpretation. Finally, it would appear that not all the barrack-blocks were built in the new style, but only those occupied by the cavalry.

Two further points are important. Rushworth interprets the rebuilding of the Hadrianic timber fort in stone on the return from the Antonine Wall as indicating abandonment during the 140s and 150s leading to the decay of the earlier buildings, if not their prior demolition when the Wall was abandoned about 142. This is useful evidence to add to the meagre stock of material relating to life on the Wall during the reign of Antoninus Pius.

Daniels' excavation was of its time and this led him to examine the uppermost layers in detail to see if evidence for post-Roman activity survived, as at Wroxeter. In this quest, he was unsuccessful because the upper levels of the fort had been damaged by later activities. Rushworth and Croom, however have been able to demonstrate that coins and pottery

indicate occupation continuing to the end of the fourth century, thereby matching the listing of the fort in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.

The finds report extends to 232 pages and space does not allow detailed discussion, but attention may be drawn to the rare discovery of a latrine seat and the 136 throwing stones, the largest number from any site in Roman Britain. A plan indicates their distribution across the whole fort, with concentrations in the barrack-blocks. The cautious conclusion, offered by W. B. Griffiths is that 'it seems likely that the stones were prepared for the defence of the fort' (p. 196).

The report is meticulous in its attention to detail and provision of parallels, as one would expect from two such experienced archaeologists. If there is one wider lesson that we could learn from the publication of this report it is that we should be more cautious when speaking about our excavations until the results have been fully analysed and published. In the meantime, we should be grateful to the authors for adding to the significant corpus of recent major publications of excavations on Hadrian's Wall.

David J Breeze

Rob Collins, Matt Symonds and Meike Weber (eds.), *Roman Military Architecture on the Frontiers; armies and their architecture in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2015). pp. 142, illus 59. ISBN 978 1 78297 990 6. £42.00.

Originating with a session at the 22nd Congress of Roman Frontier Studies in 2012, this collection of papers goes well beyond a conference proceeding. The volume brings together important new research on the late Roman frontiers, primarily concentrating on the fourth century. The papers are topped and tailed by an introduction stating the problems of the study of later military installations, from poor survival to a bias of interest towards the earlier periods by previous generations of archaeologists (Collins and Weber), and a summary suggesting ways forward for the study (Breeze). The chapters in between begin with a wide-ranging and intensive account of the late-Roman frontier armies from the perspective of the historian, which condenses a huge amount of evidence, and emphasises its great complexity (Whately). This is followed by a series of case studies; the conversion of granaries in British forts (Collins), recent results in the late Roman deposits at Binchester (Petts), and a review of the evidence from fourth-century fortlets in Britain, including those on the Yorkshire coast (Symonds). Coastal defensive structures are also tackled by Sofie Vanhoutte, in her account of changes within the fort walls at Oudenberg (Belgium), a fortress equivalent in date and function to the British Saxon Shore installations. Two Danubian legionary fortresses, at Vindobona (Austria) and Novae (Bulgaria) are examined by Mosser and Lemke, respectively. Moving east, we have an examination of the changes within the forts of the *limes Arabicus* from the Severan period to that of the Ghassanids in the sixth–seventh century (Arce), and finally Alan Rushworth examines the North African frontier.

The volume stresses the primary issue in its title — military architecture. The obvious commonality is the fact that all of the installations considered have high, thick walls and projecting towers. This was a new architecture built to reflect a changing world where, as David Breeze notes, the Roman army was set in a defensive stance — effective on the frontiers, but without the reach it had had in earlier centuries. However, many of the sites mentioned are in the same places as earlier installations, showing the continued strategic importance of particular locations. In such places the conversion of earlier military sites takes

place, and a number of patterns seem apparent on all frontiers, such as the abandonment of extra-mural settlements in the late third century, and the presence of civilians within the military enclosure (on Hadrian's Wall and at Vindobona, Oudenburg and Novae specifically), and the shrinkage, or at least the fragmentation of military units into smaller detachments attested perhaps by the conversion of barracks into workshops at Vindobona or their disuse at Novae. At Binchester, Novae and Oudenburg the bath-houses were abandoned and turned over to other uses, suggesting cultural change, possibly in the ethnic origin of troops.

In all of the papers in this volume attempts are made to interpret the architectural phenomena with what we know of the armies of the frontiers upon which the sites lie; the second consideration in the title. One of the principal sources for this in every case is the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and David Breeze rightly emphasises the need for a fresh analysis of this document. His closing chapter further urges a research strategy for late imperial frontiers, and an Empire-wide approach to their problems.

This is an excellent, much needed and thought-provoking volume, containing much that is new and challenging. Those of us who work in a British perspective can find here a great deal of information with which to more broadly contextualise our own work.

Tony Wilmott

Jennifer Proctor, Märit Gaimster, James Young Langthorne *A Quaker Burial Ground in North Shields: Excavations at Coach Lane, Tyne & Wear* (Pre-Construct Archaeology Monograph No. 20) pp. xiii + 211, 112 illus. ISBN 9 780992 667276. £20 + post & packing.

The latest instalment in the excellent Pre-Construct Archaeology Monograph Series, No. 20, deals with excavation and research at the Quaker Burial ground at Coach Lane, North Shields. The archaeology of Post-Medieval Non-conformist burial sites is a neglected area of study, and, until now, the only comparative assemblages are been from southern England. Locally, a general urban population was examined at Coronation Street, South Shields, while at the Forth Infirmary site, Newcastle, the excavation of burials of indigent hospital fatalities represent a very specialized sample. Neither of these have been, as yet, fully published. It is of great credit to all involved that the Coach Lane site has been brought to publication so speedily and comprehensively.

The publication takes the traditional format, but the account is enlivened by the inter-spersion within the narrative with a series of biographies of notable families present in the burial population. These asides are both directly relevant to the central theme of the research, and intrinsically interesting to the general reader in their own right. After a wider-ranging introduction (Section 1) the excavation description in Section 2 follows the site history from its agricultural origins before, according to Maberly Phillips' 1895 *Archaeologia Aeliana* account, it was purchased by the Society of Friends and used for burial from 1711 until 1829. By a fortunate accident of history, the boundaries remained intact and so the complete population was available for examination when the land came up for housing development. A total of 244 burials were recovered, not aligned east-west in the typical Christian manner, but, with an absence of ideological determinism, in a manner to most efficiently use the space available — in this case with heads to the south-west, but at the Kingston-upon-Thames Quaker burial ground, the primary burials were aligned north-south.

Sections 3 and 4 deal with the human remains and the grave furniture. The osteological account focuses on the implications of the evidence for demographics and health, and the

well-illustrated finds accounts describe the burial practices of the time and what they tell us of the Georgian attitude to death and resurrection, as understood by the adherents to the doctrines of the Quakers.

The sample is small, but is functionally complete, and the remains were in a very good state of preservation. The report covers evidence for the health and well-being of the population, of the sex and stature of individuals and particularly on the wider-range of disease and osteological pathology that the latest scientific techniques can elucidate.

Among the burials, the only significant deviation from the puritan doctrine of simplicity and un-adornment is in the burial of the wealthy shipping magnate, John Walker of prosperous Dockwray Square, who was expelled from the Society ('disowned') for straying 'from the path of moral rectitude'. Disowning was not uncommon; the Society of Friends burial register lists 44 individuals described as 'no longer in unity', but significantly, they were allowed burial alongside the rest of the community. The admonishments of the Society's Elders were as polite and restrained as the rest of their demeanour, with miscreants being accused of 'growing light in conversation', 'of late years getting into pride ...', and being '... exhorted by Friends to a more circumspect walking ...'.

The final section is a discussion of the implications of the excavation for the history of North Shields and for our understanding of the impact of the rapid industrialisation of Tyneside on the working population. Detailed documentary research looks at links between the North Shields Quakers and other similar groups across the North-East. The Quakers were important agents in many of the significant developments of the age. We see here the links between the ship-owning Walker family and Captain James Cook and on Teesside, the Pease family were promoters of the first passenger railway, the Stockton and Darlington line and prominent Anti-Slavery campaigners.

In summary, this is a fine piece of inter-disciplinary archaeology, made easily accessible by being written as much for the general reader as the archaeological specialist. It is a handsome volume, which is extremely well illustrated, with many of the distribution plans in colour. It will sit very happily on the bookshelf of both the local historian and Post-Medieval archaeologist.

David Heslop

