

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.

Rachel Crellin, Chris Fowler and Richard Tipping (eds), *Prehistory Without Borders* (Oxbow Books, 2016), pp. viii + 244. ISBN 9781785701993. £45

The studies in this volume are largely based on presentations given at meetings of the Tyne–Forth Prehistory Forum which was set up in 2009 to bring together archaeologists working on the prehistory of the region. Contributors come from a range of backgrounds including contract archaeology, heritage agencies and museums, as well as university departments and these differing perspectives are a major strength. The book focuses on recent research and represents the diversity of activity across the Tyne — Forth region. Papers include artefact based studies on Late Bronze Age metalwork, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age pottery and beehive querns, as well as accounts of excavations at Soutra Hill, Needles Eye and Howburn Farm. These provide the reader with detailed analyses of material culture and site-specific work. Alongside these are papers that discuss methodological issues, such as the use of relational typologies to trace social networks and work with radiocarbon dating and Bayesian modelling, within a regional context. There is also room made for broader studies of Early Bronze Age mortuary practice and Bronze Age settlement as well as work on disciplinary developments in approaches to climate change, aerial photography and surveying. Most of the papers are supported by black and white photographs, drawings, maps and tables, which add considerably to the usefulness of the volume. This rich collection will be invaluable for anyone wanting to understand the latest developments in the prehistoric archaeology of the Tyne–Forth region, particularly as archaeological publications that combine material from either side of the Anglo-Scottish border are not especially common.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the volume, at least to this reader, is the way it highlights the importance of cross-border working, something that cannot be underestimated in an age of Brexit and resurgent Scottish Nationalism. As the editors point out in their introduction, national boundaries do not necessarily correspond with prehistoric phenomena. All the same most research projects are carried out within national borders and this obviously has an impact on the research produced. This is particularly relevant to the Tyne–Forth region as the current Anglo-Scottish border only came into being in the medieval period. Two papers in the book, one authored by Colin Haselgrove, Marc Vander Linden and Leo Webley and the other by Sophie Hüglin, explore projects that have involved cross-border working in Europe and they both provide useful insights into the advantages, but also the issues, involved in this kind of collaboration. This European perspective is a reminder that the issues of cross-border working are tackled by archaeologists across the continent and Anglo-Scottish collaboration can usefully be set against this background. Modern borders should be immaterial to the interpretation of the prehistoric past. However, this is frequently not the case as differences in research funding and strategies mean that priorities can be widely divergent on either side of a border. This occurs with England and Scotland where government spending per head of population on heritage is very different; resulting in divergent research strategies and

concerns. Nevertheless, as this book demonstrates, there is a considerable desire amongst the archaeological community on both sides of the border to share good practice and to produce useful work that is not restricted by modern boundaries. This stimulating volume fills a significant gap in the archaeological literature of North East England and South East Scotland and points the way towards further cross border studies and co-operation.

Andrew Parkin

Adam Parker (ed.), *Ad Vallum: Papers on the Roman Army and Frontiers in Celebration of Dr Brian Dobson* (British Archaeological Reports British Series 631), Oxford, 2017. pp. 149, 56 illus. (6 col.) ISBN 9781407315867. £30.

This collection of papers by friends and students of the late Brian Dobson (many of them members of our society, as well as of the Hadrianic Society that he founded) is wide-ranging in subject matter. Discussions of Roman frontier archaeology extend from the Danube and the Bristol Channel (Symonds) to Flavian Scotland (Trezzi, Woolliscroft), and, of course, to Hadrian's Wall (Hunneysett). Ancient historical topics include that formidable *mater castrorum* Agrippina the Elder (Elliott) and the consciously antiquarian style of triumphal celebration under Justinian the Great (Hoffmann). Military dress is analysed as an expression of honour (Hoss), the meaning of the term *bucinator* in Vegetius is reconsidered (Macdona), and there are treatments of both phallic carvings (Parker) and the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius (Bridgland). David Breeze exploits a lifetime of civil service experience to compare Roman and modern bureaucracies, while Christopher Young considers the modern management of Roman frontier monuments. There is something for everyone, indeed.

One paper of particular interest to students of Hadrian's Wall is that by Lawrence Keppie, on a building inscription from Milecastle 38 which puts Hadrian's name in the genitive case, a rare usage often taken to indicate that the Wall was seen as 'the work of Hadrian' himself. Keppie argues that the text cannot bear this meaning, and that the natural reading of the Latin is that it refers to the 'Legion II Augusta of Hadrian' doing the building work. For all that the Latin can be read this way, Keppie has some difficulty finding parallels for military units being described as 'of [this or that particular emperor]', so the usage remains unusual — although it recurs at the Cumbrian coast fort of Moresby, after AD 128, where Hadrian surely had no personal role in the design.

Also of great interest is Jonathan Eaton's contribution on the political role of legionary centurions. This is very much on Brian Dobson's own specialist ground and fascinatingly suggests that imperial regimes manipulated centurions' promotions and transfers to ensure loyalty and security. Under Septimius Severus, for example, African centurions were transferred into the British legions, while centurions from the disloyal island province were moved to Africa where they could be closely watched.

Overall the volume is a touching tribute to Brian Dobson, one the most perspicacious scholars of the Roman army and Hadrian's Wall in our time, and a much-loved teacher. At the annual Roman Army School that he organised in Durham for over 40 years, Brian always gave equal encouragement to established professionals, students and amateurs to contribute the results of their researches. He would have enjoyed listening to these offerings — frowning, with lowered head and pursed lips — and all that is missing is the incisive, witty and appreciative feedback he would have given.

Nick Hodgson

Nick Hodgson, *Hadrian's Wall: Archaeology and History at the Limit of Rome's Empire* (Robert Hale, Ramsbury, 2017) 224 pp., 85 illus. ISBN 978 0 7198 1815 8. £19.99.

The thoughtful author balances 'What do I want to say?' with 'What do my readers wish to know?' Yet in addressing the latter, the most difficult questions to answer are those that are — on the face of it — simple and straightforward. In this very welcome book Nick Hodgson sets out to explain (among other things) '... how [the Wall] came to be built, the major events in its history, what purpose it was intended to serve, what life was like for the people who lived on the Wall and in its shadow, how archaeologists know these things, and the limits to what they can know.' This approach must have been much influenced by his involvement in WallQuest, the highly successful community archaeology project focused on Hadrian's Wall and its legacy on Tyneside. (The urban area — so often somewhat side-lined — gets due attention.) There are excellent maps and reconstructions, and some good photographs, although a few of the plans and the antiquarian illustrations of sculpture are less successful.

This can be read as a popular book but that does not mean that it has been dumbed down. Rather, this account is in the best tradition of authoritative interpretation of all of the strands of evidence. The text is not burdened with academic apparatus but the section on Further Reading and (especially) the extensive Notes, provide ample and up-to-date sources to support the explanations put forward. The structure of the book is essentially chronological, for that is the way that most people understand historical subjects. Quite a lot of attention is therefore paid to the initial construction phase of the frontier works but this is well summarised and is tempered by a long overdue focus on the indigenous population: they, after all, formed the background to the decision to establish this limit to the empire in the first place, and they provided the context for its continued occupation and use. The scant historical sources support but are not allowed to bully the archaeological evidence. Similarly, insights from broadly analogous frontiers, barriers, and military campaigns, are introduced cautiously so as to lift the text out of any narrow defile. The huge scale of the undertaking is underlined by 'a basic quantity survey', taken element by element: the Turf Wall, the Broad Wall, Turrets, the Ditch, forts, the Cumberland coast, and so on, and this is also expressed in estimates of the man-days that would have been required for construction. This is the sort of information that normal people want to know and which archaeology (with appropriate caveats) should try to tell them.

This is the book that you should give to the intelligent enquirer who wants some answers to those simple and straightforward questions about Hadrian's Wall.

Humphrey Welfare

E. Cambridge and J. Hawkes (eds), *Crossing Boundaries: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Art, Material Culture, Language & Literature of the Early Medieval World* (Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books 2017) pp. xv + 299, 130 figs, ISBN 9781785703072, £55.

This collection of twenty-seven essays is dedicated to Professor Emeritus Richard Bailey OBE in honour of his eightieth birthday. The editors state that their aim is to represent the breadth of interests of Professor Bailey and this is reflected in the choice of authors and their topics. The authors are eminent archaeologists, linguists and historians, including Rosemary Cramp, Nancy Edwards, Lindsay Allason-Jones, David Heslop, Colm O'Brien, Ian Doyle, Diana Whaley, and the editors themselves. Each essay notes Richard Bailey's contribution to our understanding of their subject. Geographically we travel from Rome to Orkney, with a

significant number of papers about the North East. The topics range from analysis of sculpture, jewellery, medieval manuscripts and deeds, iconography, architecture and lexicography. The introduction sets the scene by noting the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in revealing new insights, as exemplified in Professor Bailey's work. The essays are grouped into four parts. Part 1 ('New perspectives on insular sculpture and art') examines the iconography of insular art, including the Ruthwell Cross, Anglo-Saxon, Pictish and Welsh sculpture and Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Part 2 ('Objects and meanings') includes Jane Hawkes's reconstruction of the iconography of St Cuthbert's coffin. Other contributions focus on the Santa Sabina crucifixion panel, the Harley Psalter, Mercian and Scandinavian metalwork, eleventh–thirteenth century burial plaques from Bury St Edmunds, and evidence for the continuation of pre-Christian Norse religion in 11th century Lincolnshire.

Part 3 ('Settlements, sites and structures') has an examination of the idea of a 'Viking world', evidence of the Vikings' rich trading networks recovered in burials in Cumbria, a rune-stone from the Brough of Birsay, and the suggestion that a rich group of sculpture from Chester indicates the location of the Anglo-Scandinavian port where King Edgar received the homage of four kings in 973. Richard Bailey's espousal of dowsing as a potential means to locate archaeological features is recalled in an assessment of an apsidal building in Brixworth, Northamptonshire, and Lorna Watts argues for a re-evaluation of evidence for Roman occupation at Whitby. The final essay in Part 3 is Eric Cambridge's analysis of the anomalies in the construction of the nave and transepts of Durham Cathedral.

Part 4 ('Constructing meanings') examines early medieval texts, including examples from Ireland, the use of European vernacular in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and a re-imagining of the interior of the great hall of Heorot in *Beowulf*. More locally, there is a reflection on the spiritual journey of King Edwin of Northumbria in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*; St Hild's banishment of snakes is related to the prominence of fossil ammonites in the Whitby headland in a manuscript from Cosin's Library, Durham; and the use of an early twelfth-century Durham charter in an eighteenth-century dispute over mining rights on the Ravensworth estate is recounted. Taking text to terrain, the final essay explores the landscape around Dunstanburgh Castle in a toponymic field walk.

The volume concludes with a bibliography of Richard Bailey's publications: this demonstrates the immense contribution that his scholarship has made to the study of early medieval Britain in general and our region in particular, and which has inspired this enjoyable and informative publication.

Richard Pears

Alisdair Dobie, *Accounting at Durham Cathedral Priory: Management and Control of a Major Ecclesiastical Corporation, 1083–1539*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Finance (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2015) pp. xii + 341, ISBN 978 1 137 47977 8. £80.

The great virtue of this book is that it sets out to understand the accounting system at Durham Priory and the records generated by it as ends in themselves rather than, as previous researchers (the present reviewer included) have generally treated them, as a means to the investigation of other research agendas. Though it purports to cover the whole of the Priory's existence, lack of early documentation effectively confines discussion to its last three centuries. The author industriously summarises and tabulates useful reference information about the archive (much of it admittedly now freely available online) and convincingly

corrects earlier misconceptions about how the accounts worked, revealing a more accurate and sophisticated system than often supposed, capable of informing management policy and not merely recording incomings and outgoings. Entirely reasonably given the sheer volume of original documents a sampling strategy has been adopted; but choosing not to disclose which account-rolls were consulted nor, crucially, their lacunae (pp. 115–16, 130) leaves readers unable to evaluate the evidential basis (and *a fortiori* the statistical significance) of much of the analysis. This is a serious methodological flaw. Given the subject-matter it is also odd that so little is made of the one surviving example of an accounting manual in the Priory archive (p. 291, note 80). How far were its precepts followed in later accounts?

On, as it were, the debit side, this is a 'book of the thesis' and it shows, the firm editorial hand required to produce the leaner, sharply focussed revision appropriate for publication being conspicuous by its absence. Description is too often preferred to analysis and it is not until pp. 113–15 — half way through the main text — that 'Key Questions' defining its research objectives are set out in detail. Transcription and editorial conventions are unhelpfully buried in a footnote (p. 289, note 26). The text is often repetitious, the same evidence being presented (cut and pasted?) as though not previously mentioned (e.g. the discussions of Prior Melsonby's statutes, pp. 110, 128, 146, 219); the noble art of the cross-reference is sadly neglected here. It can also be infuriatingly discursive: the reader does not need potted histories of the Lindisfarne community from its foundation (pp. 14–15), nor of English coinage (p. 120), nor to be told why Westminster Palace burned down in 1834 and who designed its replacement (p. 118). All this makes for an over-long, needlessly turgid read.

Transcriptions of unpublished documents have not been checked for this review, but published Latin sources are sometimes quoted inaccurately (e.g. the scrambled version of the Rule of St Benedict at p. 292, note 92). Translations can also raise an eyebrow (for example in note 101 on p. 292, where the force of the *ut*-clause is missed; or the golden chalice which disconcertingly doubles in value from Latin (p. 306 note 16) to English (p. 214)). One wonders whether the author's command of original sources was equal to his task. Inevitably there are slips (e.g. for 'parish' (p. 188) read 'township'; evidence of metropolitan visitations is rare (pp. 213, 258–9) because after 1286 they should only have arisen *sede vacante*). There are also occasional typographical errors (e.g. Pope Benedictine (*sic*) XII (p. 75), or (p. 70) the collectable 'Statues (*sic*) have not survived from all the chapter meetings' — early evidence of sculpting as occupational therapy?).

Despite such reservations future researchers in the Durham Priory archives who can afford it will find this book a useful *vade mecum*. More widely, it is to be hoped that it will also stimulate further detailed research, at Durham and elsewhere, that will both make more reliable financial data available to medieval economic historians and help them to produce better informed interpretations of it.

Eric Cambridge

