



# The Archaeological Journal

## Book Reviews



**NEWCASTLE AND NORTHUMBERLAND: ROMAN AND MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE AND ART.** Edited by Jeremy Ashbee and Julian M. Luxford. Pp. viii and 278, Illus 304. Maney Publishing (British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, **36**), 2013. Price: £36.00. ISBN 978 190797 593 6.

This volume, which derives from the 2010 British Archaeological Association conference in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was conceived as bringing into prominence the variety of the monuments extant in the study area. In this, it has certainly succeeded, for it offers a series of papers dealing with material of great interest in a lucid and generally incisive way, beginning with a review by David Heslop and Grace McCombie of recent excavation and research in Newcastle-upon-Tyne itself. The papers are supported by generous illustration of high standard, and the publishers have done an excellent job in producing such an attractive volume.

An index of names would greatly increase this volume's impact, however, for several papers in it relate to the same themes. Martin Henig's discussion of Roman sculpture, for example, underlines possible Roman influence on Northumbrian sculpture (and epigraphy). This is relevant to Jane Hawkes's review of that sculpture, which compares the treatment of Christ on the Ruthwell Cross with that of the emperor in a late Roman consular diptych (pp. 44–45); and to the discussion of the coffin of St Cuthbert by Jennifer ní Ghrádaigh and Juliet Mullins, which derives the idea of scratching inscriptions on that object from graffiti in the Roman catacombs (p. 78). John Crook similarly embraces the idea that Northumbria was influenced by Rome in his assertion that the Hexham crypt was 'a Roman catacomb in miniature' (p. 143). Hawkes further reports evidence of the mounting of glass or metal in the eye-cavities of Northumbrian sculptures, arguing that the sculptures would consequently have acquired the quality of icons, with an emphasis on the light of their eyes (p. 42). The themes of light and eyes, and the meaning of the colours of stones, are central to Heather Pulliam's paper on the Lindisfarne Gospels. Drawing on new scientific analyzes of pigments, she explains the significance of the colours of the eyes of the evangelists and their symbols, as well as of their robes, in the light of Bede's *Commentary on Apocalypse*. The theme of light and eyes recurs in Ghrádaigh and Mullins's paper, in which it is suggested that the drilling of the angels' eyes on Cuthbert's coffin was intended to represent their 'penetrating vision', in line with the contemporary idea that eyes actually emitted light (pp. 80–81).

As for later medieval monuments, Richard Fawcett, Jennifer S. Alexander, and John Goodall provide usefully detailed architectural reviews respectively of Hexham Abbey, Tynemouth Priory, and Alnwick Castle, which are presented as ambitious building-projects. Really incisive, however, is Steven Brindle's discussion of the keep at

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Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the context of Henry II's assertion of English royal power in the North following the brief-lived advances there of David I of Scotland. Brindle argues that the keep was intended as a symbol of Henry II's success, and that it was designed for ceremonies such as the reception of oaths. Deserving of further research is Frank Woodman's interpretation of the upper room above the chapel in the keep of Warkworth Castle as a chamber for segregating the lord's women from 'lowly knights' who might seek to form relationships and marriages with them.

Another theme is the influence of early Northumbrian history on later centuries. Charles Tracy discusses the pulpitum in Hexham Abbey, arguing that the paintings of early Hexham bishops on it reflected the interests of the Augustinian canons there in earlier history, interests especially strong amongst Augustinians generally because their churches were often refoundations of early monasteries, as was Hexham itself. The same theme occurs in the context of a Benedictine priory in Julian Luxford's discussion of the medieval library of Tynemouth. He highlights, for example, the interest of a twelfth-century copy of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, which contains marginal notes on early history (pp. 195–96). The influence of the past is also apparent in what is the most interesting paper of all, Emma Wells's discussion of pilgrimage to sites associated with St Cuthbert on Farne and Lindisfarne. Wells presents the results of notably original research on the documentary, architectural, and archaeological evidence for the deliberate development of pilgrimage to these sites from the twelfth century onwards, and especially in the fourteenth century. The buildings of Cuthbert's time were, she shows, rebuilt and refurbished to provide foci of pilgrimage in later centuries.

All the papers deal with important monuments in a lucid and generally incisive way. Aside from the unfortunate transposition of figures 2 and 4 in Emma Wells's paper, the standard of production is high. The volume is an outstanding contribution to the British Archaeological Association's series of conference transactions.

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