



# The Archaeological Journal

## Book Reviews



**A ROMAN FRONTIER POST AND ITS PEOPLE: NEWSTEAD 1911-2011.** Edited by Fraser Hunter and Lawrence Keppie. Pp. v and 250, Illus 163. National Museums Scotland Enterprises-Publishing, 2012. Price: £30.00. ISBN 978 190526 775 0.

In 1911 James Curle published *A Roman Frontier Post and its People: the Fort of Newstead in the Parish of Melrose*: a detailed account of his excavations carried out between 1905 and 1910 on the Roman forts of Newstead. The quality of the research and detail of the publication are an incredible achievement considering the timeframe. The forts at Newstead became a major resource for understanding Roman Scotland, with the excavated pits and their contents bringing the site international renown. Curle's work at Newstead was to shape Roman frontiers studies in Scotland for much of the twentieth century. To mark the centenary of Curle's publication, Fraser Hunter and Lawrence Keppie have brought together a series of papers on Newstead, nineteen in total, which revisit the site and subject matter addressed by Curle. These papers look at the continued importance of Curle and his work, and they reinterpret the excavation and review recent research, providing both an invaluable resource and a testament to the continued legacy of Curle's work at Newstead.

The volume is handsomely produced and well-illustrated throughout and the editors should be commended for bringing together such a coherent and relevant group of contributions. Donald Gordon's and D. V. Clarke's papers offer an interesting insight into James Curle. The papers by W. S. Hanson on the Flavian and Antonine forts, Simon Clarke on the road network, and David Breeze on the final phase of the fort, revisit the chronology and phasing of the forts and provide a useful historical context. Rebecca Jones's paper on the complex sequence of camps, and David Cowley's on the crop-mark record, allows the reader to better understand the immediate environs of the forts and to appreciate the strategic importance of this location.

Curle's publication of Newstead was to mark a departure from the standard publications of Roman forts, with its focus on people, not only on the soldiers but also the civilians and the indigenous community that occupied the hinterland around the fort. This is a theme that is well addressed in this volume. Sebastian Sommer's paper on the occupation around the forts presents a detailed overview of the Newstead annexes and the pits. Summarizing the recent excavations of Newstead and providing an overview of Roman military *vici* in Britain and Germany, he argues convincingly that the annexes housed a typical military *vicus*. The paper by John Dent summarizes the Newstead Environs Project of the late 1980s and the six indigenous settlements excavated as part of this project. Anthony Birley's paper provides a useful review of the inscriptions from Newstead. The small finds from the site are eloquently addressed in chapters by N. M.

The final version of this review will appear in *The Archaeological Journal* 170 for 2013.

McQ. Holmes, Martin Henig and Walter Elliot, and Fraser Hunter; subject matter that was always at the heart of Curle's initial assessment. M. C. Bishop's paper covers the military equipment from Newstead, one of the topics that made Curle's publication so internationally influential. It would have been fitting to have a paper specifically address Curle's contribution to pottery studies, but several of the authors make reference to it.

Such a broad and detailed collection of papers by different scholars will inevitably contain contradictory views. One notable example addresses a subject of particular interest to Curle; the role of the 'native' indigenous peoples at Newstead. John Dent's paper states that the local population would have made up the occupants of the civilian settlement at Newstead, illustrated by the large amount of indigenous finds from the excavations. In contrast, Sebastian Sommer's analysis of the military *vicus* concludes that the population of the site would have been camp followers and settlers from elsewhere in the Empire, given the similarities in settlement layout and building structure. It is a subject that still needs to be resolved with further study, highlighting that the forts at Newstead still have much to reveal, and this volume offers an invaluable starting point to stimulate future research and debate.

JAMES BRUHN