



# The Archaeological Journal

## Book Reviews



**ROMAN CAMPS IN SCOTLAND.** By REBECCA H. JONES. Pp xxix and 367, Illus 221. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011. Price: £30.00. ISBN 978 0 903903 50 9.

*Roman Camps in Scotland* completes the triumvirate of *Roman Camps in England* (Welfare and Swan, 1995) and *Roman Camps in Wales and the Marches* (Davies and Jones, 2006). The volume, based on the author's doctoral research, can be split into two halves. The second half neatly presents the data in the form of an illustrated gazetteer of known Roman camps up to 2009. Each entry is provided with at least one plan illustration in which the camp can be clearly seen in relation to the current landscape and topography. The illustration is accompanied by a textual summary and assessment of the camp(s), as well as a grid reference. Importantly, possible and probable camps are indicated as well as those that are definite, with those sites of dubious or discounted claims removed from the list. Thus, we have a very comprehensive gazetteer that offers useful introductions to the sites. While this is an impressive presentation of data, the first half of the book provides the necessary analysis. Chapters 1–3 set the stage with a consideration of classification, which is explicitly linked to function, as well as source material and antiquarian tradition. Chapters 4–7 assess the existing data itself, notably considering aerial photographic evidence, distribution, and the anatomy and morphologies of the camps. Chapters 8–10 set the Scottish camps in a broader perspective, examining historical context and providing an interpretive summary of the data.

The study of Roman camps is difficult, as there is little excavated evidence and the scholar is reliant upon the quality and coverage of photographic, topographic, and geophysical survey. Jones has significantly contributed to the primary collection of data, and this field experience greatly enhances the volume. Each chapter provides a clear overview and assessment of discrete topics, for example the excavation and survey (Chapter 5) or distribution of camps (Chapter 6), but two chapters stand out. Chapter 7 (the field evidence) breaks down the camp into its basic components, offering an overview of the full range of types of gates, form, proportion, and morphology of defences, occurrence of annexes and internal features, among other topics. This chapter is essential, as it demonstrates that the diversity of forms that individual features of a camp can take, such that the sum of these features yields a surprisingly diverse body that can be carefully scrutinized. This examination is presented in Chapter 10, in which Jones critically considers the strength of dating evidence and its broader application across a series of camps. The geographical sequencing of camps in a given series, coupled with dating evidence and historical context, yields a potential historical interpretation, linked to phases of Roman campaign and conquest. This in turn offers further insight into the repeated Roman conquests of Scotland.

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Across the entire volume, there is very little to be critical about. The final chapter is the most stimulating, though it is the least supported by illustrations. There were times when it would have been convenient to present the reader with a distribution map that related to the proposed series or succession of series of camps, as well as reinforcing the interpretations offered. This criticism aside, Jones raises a number of interesting points with significant implications for the study of a campaigning Roman army.

The volume is user-friendly; between the gazetteer, the bold-facing of site names, and the index, the reader can very quickly access the pertinent information. The photographs, site plans, and maps are produced to a very high and consistent quality on thick glossy paper, excellently complementing the text. Jones is to be applauded for the consistency of quality and sheer volume of illustration. Indeed, the high production quality of the volume is such that even post-medieval archaeologists were enticed to pick it up from my desk! She has succeeded in providing a tome that will prove useful to students of Roman military studies internationally, not only masterfully presenting the Scottish evidence, but also setting a standard by which to examine and consider Roman camps across its vast former empire.

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