doi:10.1017/s0003581516000597

The Antonine Wall: a handbook to Scotland's Roman frontier. By ANNE S ROBERTSON, 6th edn, revised and edited by LAWRENCE KEPPIE. 210mm. Pp 144, 75 ills (some col). Glasgow Archaeological Society, Glasgow, 2015. ISBN 9780902018143. £9.95 (pbk).

This handbook to Scotland's Roman frontier first appeared in print in 1960 as a wallet-sized guide to the remains produced by the late Professor Anne Robertson. This latest edition, the sixth, maintains her name on the cover but is very much the product of Professor Lawrence Keppie, adding a wealth of additional information gleaned from decades of studying, walking and excavating the remains.

The book maintains its pocket size, but this belies the volume of information contained within. Produced by the Glasgow Archaeological Society, it is the first edition since the Wall became inscribed as part of the international 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire' World Heritage Site in 2008, and includes the Antonine Wall brand on the cover: the Bridgeness Distance Slab cavalry figure logo.

The handbook is divided into two parts: the first contains an overview of the Wall and its component parts from its construction in the mid-second century AD to its abandonment a generation later. This section provides a concise introduction and summary of the key aspects of this frontier, geographically and chronologically close to its English neighbour, Hadrian's Wall, but differing in a number of areas, not least its construction in turf, making the survival of some of the remains vulnerable to centuries of agricultural improvements and development. A short, well-illustrated section on the distance slabs highlights this remarkable collection of material (much of which is on display in the Hunterian, University of Glasgow).

The Wall is then described from east to west – it is in this section that much of the new information on the Wall comes to light. While many of the plans are familiar to seasoned Wall students, the colourful drawing of a cross-section of the well at Bar Hill brings the significance of those early twentieth-century discoveries to life; the select use not only of colour but of illustrations that bleed right to the edges of the page makes the volume attractive and maximises the amount of information, both visual and textual, that can be conveyed. Keppie has managed to obtain information and illustrations about sites that were still in post-excavation or pre-publication, such as Camelon (immediately north of the Wall but part of the frontier) and Bearsden (excavation published in 2016). Elsewhere, the provisional nature of some information is exemplified at Falkirk, where it is noted that the relationship between fort and Wall is unclear, despite what is indicated on the interim plan, but this provides a current summary. Finally, the bibliography provides an update of key sources of material.

New work on the Wall is mentioned: recent geophysical survey results and the recent acquisition of LiDAR, which has the potential to provide much new information. Indeed, the delivery of the World Heritage Management Plan will see exciting new digital media applications.

Marrying museum collections with the frontier remains, this is an indispensable guide to all who are interested in studying or visiting Rome's north-western frontier.

REBECCA H JONES

doi:10.1017/s000358151600010x

The Anglo-Saxon Avon Valley Frontier: a river of two halves. By HANNAH WHITTOCK and MARTYN WHITTOCK. 240mm. Pp 144, 33 col pls, 1 map. Fonthill Media (place of publication not stated but Stroud, Glos), 2014. ISBN 9781781552827. £16.99 (pbk).

Like its eponymous river, this book is of two halves: one written by a father, an established author of many school textbooks, the other by his daughter, based on a second-year undergraduate and an MPhil dissertation (pp 143–4). Broadly speaking, paternal influence drives the first half of the book, daughterly knowledge the second.

After 'The Main Evidence Base' in Chapter One – an awkwardly handled list that begs the question for whom is the book intended – Chapters Two to Six develop a chronologically based narrative and discussion of the period *c* AD 300–1100. In an old-fashioned sort of history devoid of social and economic considerations, the comings and goings of kings, queens, their chief retainers and top ecclesiastics dominate proceedings in the area that is now Gloucestershire, north Somerset and Wiltshire. The basic plot is given away in the subtitle. It is that, as a frontier, the history of the 'Bristol Avon' from

Avonmouth in the west, where it joins the Severn, upstream to Bath or more specifically the mini-gorge at Limpley Stoke, is different from that of the upper reaches of the same river as its line curves east from Bradford on Avon and then wiggles somewhat inconspicuously north towards Malmesbury. Though passing through an area that was often a border zone during the period under review, this eastern stretch of the river was seldom recognised as a formal frontier and is not one today. Contrast that with the western Avon, which can be convincingly argued to have been a frontier in late prehistoric times through, on and off, to the present.

Though much of the detail of the charter-based evidence used here is new to this reviewer, the basic hypothesis is not. Nor is the idea of a hill-fort-based 'sub-kingdom' of some sort in north Somerset in the fifth to sixth centuries (therefore implying a frontier along the western Avon). But, while declaring an interest, my main reason for raising this particular matter is that the idea and its implications are very much based on the excavation of Cadbury-Congresbury *c* 1970, a key site for the Whittock hypothesis; yet it is mentioned but once (p 40) and then only with secondary references. No reference at all is made to the substantial final excavation report masterminded by our late Fellow Philip Rahtz (Rahtz *et al* 1992). No wonder the Whittock discussion shows no awareness of the nature or context of, for example, the 720 excavated sherds of Mediterranean pottery, and plumps so incautiously for only one of the range of interpretative options. Just search 'Cadbury-Congresbury' online for several more authoritative summaries.

Throughout the book, indeed, the authors convey an impression of awkwardness in handling archaeological evidence: it does not 'speak' to them as do charters. But, in contrast and very much using charters, a credible case is made, for example, for the careful deployment of ecclesiastical centres such as minsters and monasteries along the whole river as tactical expressions of 'frontiermanship' when new Anglo-Saxon territories were jostling for space both before and after the Viking wars (Chapters Five and Six).

On practical matters, the book cries out for maps: not everyone is as familiar as are the authors with their region's topography, and some good local detailed maps could have clarified description as well as shortened text. The single map, placed (arguably upside down) before the title page, is not listed or referenced. The unlisted, unnumbered photographs, clumped together between pp 96 and 97, are not referred to anywhere either. The referencing system is a sort of 'hybrid Harvard': references are by in-text numbers *supra* to 'Notes' (pp 123–34), where bibliographical detail is mixed up with explanatory notes, in some cases quite long ones. The bibliographical references in the 'Notes' are often in a form suitable for in-text referencing but are just as likely to be of the '*op cit* / ibid' variety. The bibliography itself (pp 135–42) is interestingly eclectic, but, unforgivably, no index is provided.

A book that should have been meat and drink to this reviewer, an ex-resident and ex-student of the Bath area, has proved unenjoyable both to read and to review. While academic in nature and honest in intent, and with merit in some respects, it is not a scholarly or authoritative publication, because too much of it is unoriginal or derivative, and simply as a book it requires better design and editing to carry off its complexities as a detailed local study and, even more fundamentally, more thought about for whom it is written.

Rahtz, P A ***et al*** 1992. *Cadbury-Congresbury 1968–73: a late / post-Roman hilltop settlement in Somerset*, BAR Brit Ser 223, BAR, Oxford

PETER FOWLER

doi:10.1017/s0003581516000391

Glastonbury Abbey: archaeological investigations 1904–79. By ROBERTA GILCHRIST and CHERYL GREEN. 305mm. Pp 494, col and b&w ills. The Society of Antiquaries of London, London, 2015. ISBN 9780854313006. £45 (hbk).

Glastonbury Abbey is a numinous place, which has been a centre of attraction to antiquaries and archaeologists as well as those absorbed in the legends of King Arthur since the twelfth century. It is thus hardly surprising that it has accumulated a vast body of record and comment. Roberta Gilchrist and Cheryl Green, with a distinguished team of thirty-one specialists, therefore took on a huge task in trying to reassess and reinterpret all known archaeological investigations from 1904 to 1979. This publication, as well as the digital archive, is the fruit of their project (Glastonbury Abbey Archaeological Archive Project) in which the Trustees of Glastonbury Abbey and the University of Reading collaborated, and it represents a notable achievement.