

FAMOUS NUMISMATISTS – LES GRANDS NUMISMATES

Anne Strachan Robertson (1910-1997)*

Anne Strachan Robertson, whose parents were both school teachers, was born in Glasgow on 3 May 1910 and died there on 4 October 1997. Educated in Glasgow at Hillhead High School and the Glasgow High School for Girls, she entered Glasgow University in 1928, graduating with first class honours in classics in 1932. She continued her studies at University College London, this time in archaeology as one of the first students registered in the postgraduate MA programme under R.E. Mortimer Wheeler's direction at the newly founded Institute for Archaeology. She graduated in 1934, having acquired considerable experience in modern archaeological methods while participating in Wheeler's excavation of Maiden Castle. During the same period her expertise in Roman numismatics was greatly enhanced by practical experience in the Coins and Medals Department of the British Museum.



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Her return to Glasgow the following year marked the beginning of a lifelong association with the Hunterian Museum of the University of Glasgow and its renowned Hunter Coin Cabinet. From 1938 she also held a permanent teaching position at the university as Darlymple Lecturer in Archaeology, becoming reader in 1964, and finally in 1974, one year before her retirement, Professor of Roman Archaeology, one of the first women to achieve professorial rank at Glasgow University.

With her dual interest in ancient coins and the archaeology of Roman Scotland, Robertson followed closely in the footsteps of Sir George Macdonald. Without question her greatest scholarly achievement was her catalogue of *The Roman Imper-*

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ial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet, which complements Macdonald's three-volume *Catalogue of Greek Coins* (1899-1905). Her work, which appeared in five volumes published from 1962 to 1982, contains a richly illustrated listing and description of around 12,000 coins, making this by far the most comprehensive catalogue of Roman coins of any public collection in the British Isles outside the British Museum. She also followed Macdonald's example in continuing his surveys of Roman coins found in Scotland, which she published from 1949 in four lengthy inventories at regular intervals in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, last appearing in 1983. The evidence from those surveys stimulated an interest in relations between the invading Romans and the native Iron Age inhabitants of Scotland that led her to publish a number of articles on material evidence for relations between the two cultures. Her final years were devoted to another massive project, *Romano-British Coin Hoards*, published posthumously in 2000, and providing an inventory that lists over 1,900 coin hoards discovered up to 1992. Though frequent updating is inevitable, this work will long remain a basic reference for much archaeological and historical research.

In her archaeological work also Robertson succeeded Macdonald as the senior expert of her day on the Antonine frontier in Scotland. In contrast to Macdonald's magisterial *Roman Wall in Scotland* (1934), her brief guide to the surviving remains, *The Antonine Wall*, appears deceptively slight. Written by one who had the subject at her fingertips, however, Robertson's work, first published in 1960 and now in its fifth edition, has assumed the role as the essential *vade mecum* for the Antonine Wall that J. Collingwood Bruce's venerable *Handbook to the Roman Wall* (1863) has long played for Hadrian's Wall. In her career as a field archaeologist Robertson was in the forefront in applying modern excavation techniques to Roman sites in Scotland in the decades after World War II, and played a leading role in raising standards through training students at the field schools that she conducted annually at her excavations. In the course of a field career of over forty years she directed a number of important excavations on Roman forts, the results of which she published promptly and in exemplary form. Although her research was concentrated almost exclusively on Roman Scotland and the coin collections for which she was responsible at the Hunterian Museum, her numismatic achievements were recognized internationally in the award of medals of both the Royal Numismatic Society (1964) and The American Numismatic Society (1970).

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Further Reading

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