

## REVIEWS

Malcolm Todd (ed), *Research on Roman Britain 1960-89*, xii + 271 pp, 77 figs. Published by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, London, 1989, price £19.50

This eleventh volume in the admirable *Britannia* Monograph Series of the Roman Society is a wide-ranging survey of the achievements in research on Roman Britain over the past 30 years. Sixteen articles by a panel of able scholars distil the annual summaries published in *Britannia* (formerly in *JRS*) into potable draughts which should enable the scholar and university teacher to avoid the hysteresis which sometimes afflicts their work. A lapidary dedication and the editor's preface emphasize the key role which Shepperd Frere, an Honorary Vice-President of our own Society, has played in the astonishing surge of knowledge described by John Wilkes in the final article, 'A prospect of Roman Britain'; this can usefully be read first since it is as much retrospect as prospect.

It would be difficult to assess adequately all the papers within the compass of a short review, and readers of the *Collections* may be less than interested in, say, the northern frontiers. So, it may be useful to follow the editors' suggestion of picking out areas and topics more directly relevant to those working in the south-east. Thus, the introductory paper by Colin Haselgrove, 'The later Iron Age in southern Britain and beyond', is a useful though densely referenced survey of advances in our knowledge of the Celtic background to Roman Britain. But the reader should take note that some apparently convincing generalizations, for instance on agricultural practice, may not be founded on an adequate body of evidence. And 'brickwork fields' (p 5), a useful concept for those familiar with air-photography, might suggest the intrusion of industrial archaeology to the innocent reader, until he reaches pp 117-18. Two papers on the towns of Roman Britain, 'The early cities' by Malcolm Todd and 'Cities from the second to the fourth centuries' by John Wachter, incorporate the results of excavation at London, Chichester and Canterbury. Todd is perhaps more analytical (there are no illustrations) while Wachter is more pragmatic, with a liberally illustrated text. *Londinium* remains something of an enigma in the urban picture in spite of the vast sums of public money poured into its excavation.

There follow four papers on various aspects of rural life in Roman Britain, of which two, David Miles' 'The Romano-British countryside' and Martin Jones' 'Agriculture in Roman Britain: the dynamics of change', could be most directly relevant to the active workers in our Society. Both exhibit the jargon unfortunately now an intrinsic element in this field of study, but their value lies in the emphasis on the slower pace of rural innovation as compared with urban life. Survey plus sampling, as opposed to excavation of single sites, is recommended as the way forward by Miles, with emphasis on continuity from the late Iron Age and into the Anglo-Saxon period. For Jones environmental research offers a scientifically based approach to agrarian change, illustrated more specifically by Annie Grant's bone study, 'Animals in Roman Britain'. Our knowledge of the Surrey countryside in the Roman period is sadly deficient and is largely villa-orientated, as David Bird's article in *The archaeology of Surrey to 1540* makes clear. Some of our members are already engaged in field survey and a Roman villa section is also active, so the potential for further advances in local archaeology exists, provided that the best modern techniques are employed.

Among the remaining papers it is difficult to detect much of specific local interest until we reach Martin Henig's 'Religion in Roman Britain'. Michael Fulford's 'The economy of Roman Britain' is an important and wide-ranging survey, but the Wealden iron industry and, even more, tile-making offer the best hopes for local research. Henig's paper concludes by reproducing David Williams' fine drawing of the Wanborough regalia, a useful reminder

of this important temple site rescued by our Society in the nick of time from inglorious spoliation. Surrey, with Wanborough and Farley Heath, can boast two important temple sites. I expect we all have our private image of the county in remote times, and to me the seclusion and mystery of such religious centres embody the impression of untouched wilderness which on rare occasions can still be gained by the solitary walker.

To conclude, this is a welcome addition to the spate of literature on Roman Britain. If it has a fault (apart from a very skimpy *index rerum*), it is the occasional effect of insular self-satisfaction. The editor's own contribution, with its wider perspective, is a welcome exception, and one can only hope that our university teachers will open the eyes of the young to the enticing prospect of other provinces of the Empire.

F H THOMPSON

*Visitors Welcome*, 170 pp, published by English Heritage, 1988, price £25 (paperback)

It would be foolish in today's climate of inadequate funding and keen competition for the money that is available, for archaeologists to ignore the commercial possibilities of an excavation, and there is undoubtedly a need for encouragement and advice on presenting and interpreting sites to the public. English Heritage is therefore to be commended for recognising the need and sponsoring this manual, prepared for them by the Centre for Environmental Interpretation at Manchester Polytechnic.

*Visitors Welcome* is attractively presented with well set-out clear text, profusely illustrated with line drawings and photographs, although it is a pity that some of the latter are so poorly reproduced. Two-thirds of the book is concerned with planning the presentation of a site and is divided into sections devoted to aspects such as promotion, public relations, and deployment of staff, all of which are relevant, but which would have benefited from much stricter editing. The text is considerably more discursive than is justified by the description of 'manual' and there is some overlap between the sections, leading to unnecessary repetition. It is with some relief therefore that one reaches the summary at the end of each section. Some advice too, such as not letting a reluctance to speculate spoil the potential for a good story, seems questionable, and the idea that promotions might be subsidised by grants may raise a hollow laugh, though it is encouraging to know that English Heritage intends to make such grants available to selected excavations.

It is claimed that the book is intended for professionals and amateurs and that it is concerned with relatively low-cost promotions only, but all the examples are taken from large, long-term, well-funded excavations and it is really to this scale of archaeology that it seems to be directed. There is the occasional concession to the small dig such as using plant labels to signify different levels and chalking a daily bulletin on a black-board, but these are momentary lapses. Most directors will probably find some food for thought here, but on the whole there is little in the first part that is strictly relevant to the typical small county operation, whether professional or amateur.

The remainder of the book consists of a Technical Appendix which, though still tending to the prolix, contains much useful information and advice on costing, the law, insurance, sponsorship, design and other practical matters. Particularly valuable are the lists of sources and addresses, though these, like the estimated costs which are based on 1987/88 prices, will need regular revision.

The section summaries and appendix really supply all the information needed in such a manual, and alone would have resulted in a more readable and inexpensive book. At £25 this one is unlikely to find many individual purchasers although consulted selectively it could be a useful addition to a reference library.

VIVIEN ETLINGER

Rowland G M Baker, *A guide to the industrial archaeology of the Borough of Elmbridge*, 44 pp, 15 illustrations, 2 maps, published by Surrey Industrial History Group, 1989, price £2

This is the third in the series, which is intended eventually to cover all administrative areas in Surrey. Prepared by the late Rowland Baker, it was seen through the press by Francis Haveron.

Elmbridge is rich in industrial archaeology, with its surviving, or remains of, seven watermills, Walton-on-Thames film studios (when they closed the oldest cinematography studios in the country), White Lady mile stone on the Portsmouth road (18th century), Wey Navigation (17th century, the first navigation in the country), Chatley Heath telegraph tower (19th century semaphore signalling system from London to Portsmouth Docks), Painshill Park waterwheel (30' diameter wheel, 19th century), Brooklands race track and aircraft factory (first purpose-built banked race track, and home of Sopwith, Bristol and Vickers) to name a few of the nearly 200 sites mentioned. Anyone interest in the surviving industrial archaeology of the borough should get a copy.

Those not familiar with the area will need to be armed with an OS map. Each site is located by a grid reference but the map in the booklet neither locates the sites nor provides the grid lines.

G P MOSS