REVIEWS

M. C. Bishop and J. C. N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, Batsford London 1993. ISBN 0 7134 6637 5. £35 256pgs 8 PLs, 143 figs.

The last ten years have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of attention focused on Roman Military Equipment, and it is now an area of study with an identity all its own. The authors of this volume have been at the forefront of this development; particularly Bishop, who initiated the now well-established International Roman Military Equipment conference, and who edits both *Arma*, a newsletter on the topic, and the Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies. Prior to this quiet revolution the subject was seen as an artefactual one, or, rather simplistically, in terms of "Arms and Armour"; however, the work, largely instigated by the two authors, carried out over the last ten years has given the discipline a wider perspective, and reveals it as "a window into the practical workings of the Roman army" (p.12). The sheer quantity of new work being carried out presents a problem for someone coming to the subject afresh, a problem Bishop and Coulston have set out to correct. This book then is a long awaited academic synthesis of the current state of play in Roman military equipment studies.

The first three chapters are concerned with the sources of evidence, dealing with the representational, archaeological and documentary evidence in turn, outlining the problems and pitfalls, as well as the merits, of each. This is a particularly useful summary as in the past the subject has been dominated by the injudicious use of literary sources, particularly Vegetius. In addition, scenes from Trajan's Column have often been widely and misleadingly used to illustrate the "look" of the Roman Army in all periods, when it is by no means certain that it correctly portrays all the details of the army of its own time.

Archaeological reconstruction is referred to (p.39) as having an important role to play in the topic, if carefully managed, thus acknowledging the work initiated by the late Russell Robinson, and continued by re-enactment groups such as the Ermine Street Guard and *Cohors Quinta Gallorum* (the South Shields Group) today. Usually such work is often belittled as children's entertainment and it is refreshing to see the contribution it can make recognized in an academic work.

Naturally enough, the bulk of the book is taken up with a discussion of the equipment itself. This section is divided chronologically, instead of, as may perhaps have been expected, item by item (although each chronological chapter is subdivided by item). This may appear confusing at first glance, but ultimately is the best way of charting meaningfully the changes in military equipment over 700 years. To treat each item as a completely separate entity would negate the whole argument for viewing military equipment as an area of integrated study, the whole rationale behind Bishop and Coulston's approach. Unfortunately this chronological layout does result in the general discussion of individual items being spread through several chapters. A case in point is the spear; its function is addressed in the Republican chapter but the problems of producing an archaeological typology are left to the next chapter, "From Augustus to Hadrian". However, this is but a minor quibble as it is easy enough to follow the items through the chapters.

The final two chapters cover some more general topics such as the ownership and supply of equipment; all are concise yet authoritative. The section on technology (pp.188–95) in particular, is a refreshingly clear, yet brief, discussion of an aspect of the subject which is often ignored, or, at best, ill understood.

The short appendix, "Was there 'Legionary' Equipment?" (pp.206–9), provides the author's reply to a view that has gained some acceptance in recent years that there was no clear differentiation between legionary and auxiliary equipment. This view has grown from the discovery of traditional legionary equipment (*pila* heads, *lorica segmentata* fittings, etc.) in auxiliary forts. However, Bishop and Coulston demonstrate that there was indeed a distinct difference between the equipment of the legionary and auxiliary (as demonstrated by study of tombstones), at least until the third-century A.D., and suggest rather that the answer may lie in a reconsideration of the garrisoning practices of the Roman Army. Separate detachments of both legionary and auxiliary units are well attested in our sources (p.209); a case in point being the third century garrison at South Shields, *Cohors Quinta Gallorum*, which is also attested at Cramond in the early third century. However, the whole question of the garrisoning of forts is a vexed one which could fill a whole volume, and Bishop and Coulston have not sought to enter too deeply into the debate, except to refute the arguments advanced for allowing a dismissal of legionary finds in auxiliary sites.

As befits a volume on a subject concerned primarily with artefactual remains, the book is copiously illustrated with clear, but not over subjective, drawings (almost exclusively by Bishop). However, despite the author's view (p.12) that line illustrations are preferable to photographs, this reviewer would have preferred to see a few more plates, particularly of the smaller items such as belt fittings, and some of the more magnificent finds such as the Dura Europos horse armour, the intricacy of which simply cannot be appreciated from a drawing. There are also a few disappointing plates, particularly the out-of-focus shot of the Tyne Boss (pl.3a) and the mystifying reproduction in plate 2 of four helmets at different scales, made worse by the use of a large photograph of the unadorned Buch helmet next to a miniscule plate of the highly decorated gilded silver helmet sheath from Deurne. However, it may well be that the publishers, rather than the authors, are to blame for these design faults.

As is to be expected from these authors, the work is up to date and, despite its size, concisely and clearly written. It is supported by fully referenced notes and an authoritative bibliography. There is little, particularly in the final chapters where it may perhaps be expected, in the way of conclusions in this work, but given the amount of attention focused on the subject at present this is perhaps wise. However, there can be little doubt that Bishop and Coulston have succeeded admirably in their aim to provide an academic introduction to the subject, bringing together the disparate strands of many people's work in this one volume. This is an achievement which guarantees that this book will be a major reference work, and a solid foundation for future research for a long time to come.

W. B. GRIFFITHS

Catherine Clark, *Ironbridge Gorge*, (Batsford/English Heritage, 1993), pp.143, figs. and plts. 109, col. plts. 15. Price £14·99 (limp). ISBN 0 7134 6737 1 (cased), 0 7134 6738 X (limp).

This volume is one of a series being jointly published by English Heritage and Batsford, which aims to "bring the past to life, by interpreting the great historic monuments in which Britain is so rich". Of the forty or so volumes which will comprise the series, only *Ironbridge Gorge* deals specifically with industrial monuments; one must, I suppose, be grateful for small mercies. Clark's central aim is to "set the Iron Bridge in its archaeological context of time and space" by examining the industrial development of the Ironbridge Gorge from the medieval period to the present day. More specifically the book "is intended to be an

introduction to reading this landscape and to beginning to understand what it can tell us about the past". Putting aside the clumsy sentence construction (although there are numerous similar examples, as well as lapses in basic grammar), this apparently objective pursuit is critically flawed by an assumption underpinning this work which has not and can not be derived from archaeological evidence. Thus the "Introduction" informs the reader that the Ironbridge Gorge was "once the hub of the Industrial Revolution", but nothing which follows even begins to justify or quantify that assertion; we read of "unprecedented expansion in production' without a single statistic in support. Moreover since Clark clearly believes that the Industrial Revolution took place in the eighteenth century, that it could take place in any particular industry in any particular place and at any particular time, that its defining characteristic is a massive increase in production, whether of iron, or clay pipes for smoking purposes—all contentious issues—she has implicitly circumscribed her statements about the significance or otherwise of the Ironbridge Gorge to the eighteenth century. Could it be that the hype perpetrated by the creators of the Iron Bridge, and now continued by the heritage industry, has drawn a veil of mystification over the significance of the Ironbridge Gorge which only the non-committed are prepared to draw back?

We can only approve of the premiss that "archaeology can do more than just fill the gaps in the documents", and that, for example, a proper understanding of the Iron Bridge requires an examination of the landscape around it, but there are other contexts, notably the national context of industrialization. It is claimed that within a century of the Dissolution, the Gorge reached national prominence as a source of coal. The only data produced to support this statement shows that in 1635, the "tiny area of Bentham alone produced 30,000 tons of coal per year"; for comparison it might have been noted that just one north-eastern waggonway was probably carrying in excess of 125,000 tons per year at that time and that total north-east coal exports were approaching 400,000 tons per year. Likewise we are informed that Darby & Co were in the "forefront of ironworking" but with no comparison with, for example, the Crowley works, described in 1771 by Arthur Young (who later visited the Ironbridge Gorge), as "supposed to be among the greatest manufactories of the kind in Europe". Even in its geographically-limited aim to incorporate landscape archaeology into the analysis of the Ironbridge Gorge industries, this book hardly scratches the surface and consequently fails in its primary aim.

These are major criticisms, but they are not the only ones which need to be addressed. The author displays a poor understanding of technology, for example in her failure to understand the process of limeburning, in phrases such as "new forms of cast iron", in a confusing assertion that where water was "pumped out of the river with a steam engine, and fed back over water-wheels which powered the bellows [an] added advantage [was] that the furnace could continue even if the steam engine was broken".

Regrettably these are not isolated examples but to give more would undoubtedly prove tedious. There are then problems with this book. Indeed, the very first paragraph of the Introduction, concerning the "famous" Iron Bridge, is so confused and misleading that this reviewer was in considerable doubt about the wisdom of reading on. However a useful chapter on the medieval period is followed by chapters on coal, iron, ceramics, limestone, the Iron Bridge, transport, and the Victorian period, and the author indicates where archaeological evidence has enlarged our understanding of the Ironbridge Gorge industries and communities; much recent research, both documentary and archaeological, has thus been woven into the account. The whole is enlivened with numerous maps, excellently reproduced photographs and colour plates, and reconstruction line drawings, albeit the latter are sometimes at variance with the text—one Adam Crompton is described as a ferryman and miner in the text, but as a coalmaster in the caption to an illustration, and a waterwheel is described as being under cover in the text but is

shown without such cover in the accompanying illustration.

Apparently aimed at a wide readership, this volume is most reasonably priced at £14·99: but let the buyer beware.

STAFFORD M. LINSLEY

Books Received

Geoffrey Parnell, *The Tower of London*, Batsford/English Heritage, London 1993. 128 pages, 105 illustrations. Paperback £14·99.

The author describes the evolution of the Tower through its complex history which leaves it as one of the major tourist attractions of London.

Patrick Ottaway, *Roman York*, Batsford/English Heritage London 1993, 125 pages, 86 illustrations. Paperback £14·99.

This book traces the development and decline of the Roman fortress and civilian settlement from their foundation to their decline in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Particular emphasis is placed on the results of recent excavations and unpublished research which have greatly extended our understanding of Roman York.

Guy de la Bédoyère, *Roman Villas and the Countryside*, Batsford/English Heritage, London 1993, 143 pages, 129 illustrations, Paperback £14·99.

This book gives an attractive but critical account of what we know about life in the countryside in Roman Britain and goes some way to correct the imbalance arising naturally from our concentration on towns and military works in Roman Britain.

Glyn Coppack, *Fountains Abbey*, Batsford/English Heritage London 1993. 127 pp. 95 illustrations + 12 in colour. Paperback £14.99.

Fountains—the finest of monastic remains in this country and accessible to the mobile in The North of England. This volume offers an authoritative and up-to-date introduction to a visit.

Michael Parker Pearson, *Bronze Age Britain*, Batsford/English Heritage, London 1993. 144 pages, 141 illustrations. Paperback £14·99.

Michael Parker Pearson in this book gives an account of the changes that took place in the British Isles between 4000 and 900 B.C., including the change from gathering and hunting to farming, the building of tombs for ancestors, the creation of ceremonial landscapes, and the developments in trade and society.

John Steane, *The Archaeology of the Medieval English Monarchy*, Batsford, London 1993. 226pp, 121 illustrations. Hardback £35·00.

By study of the physical remains of the English medieval monarchs—regalia, houses, gardens, burials, sports, feasts and ceremonies—the author in this handsome volume reconstructs much satisfying detail in the lives and deaths of these regal figures.

B. Till, *York against Durham: the guardianship of the Spiritualities in the diocese of Durham sede vacante*, Borthwick Paper No: 84, £2·09 plus 35p p+p (overseas p+p 50p). Available from Borthwick Institute, St. Anthonys Hall, York YO1 2PW

In this 31-page pamphlet Barry Till traces the long contention between the Archbishop of York and the Dean and Chapter of Durham as to which should exercise the jurisdiction or guardianship of the spiritualities of the see of Durham *sede vacante*. The dispute, running from the Reformation to 1975, must rank among the most protracted litigations of all time.

Charles Thomas, *Tintagel: Arthur and Archaeology* Batsford/English Heritage, London 1993. 188×248 mm. 144 pages. 120 illustrations. Paperback £14·99

Though never losing sight of the romantic Arthurian aspect of the site, the author deals objectively with its archaeology—post-Roman contacts with the Mediterranean, early Christian and medieval—as well as with the modern excavations, survey, interpretation and development.