

conquered territory' (p. 122). One might ask, if this was the reason for the distance slabs, why they are unique? The distance slabs maintain their mystique.

The other objects with a mystique are the small bronze vessels associated with Hadrian's Wall, generally called 'pans' but in size closer to soup ladles and more correctly called *trullae*. Interestingly, Ferris describes them as 'representing a map to be held in the hand' (p. 125). The Ilam Pan does not relate to this description with its 'vegetal scrolling' representing 'a stylised design of plants and trees, the wild natural landscape and topography of the Roman north' (p. 173), a step too far for this reviewer.

Ferris emphasises that much Roman art in the north would seem to have been preoccupied with movement through the landscape, a marrying of distance and time, situating recording and commemoration in the very landscape setting in which movements took place. Art and setting were here one and the same. Knowledge of local materials, of local stone outcrops, was gained by walking and traversing the land to try to understand its natural properties and essence, 'turning Nature into culture' (p. 125); an accurate summary of the primary theme of this book. If this was true of northern Britain, was it a purely British phenomenon or can it be recognised in other frontier provinces?

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Roman Frontier Archaeology – in Britain and Beyond: papers in honour of Paul Bidwell presented on the occasion of the 30th annual conference of the Archaia Society. Edited by Nick Hodgson and Bill Griffiths. 290mm. Pp vii + 371, many col figs. Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 92, Oxford, 2022. ISBN 9781803273440. £60 (pbk).

This volume is a fitting tribute to Paul Bidwell, who contributed so much to our understanding and appreciation of Roman archaeology. The introduction provides an overview of Bidwell's career including his work on Roman Exeter, his leadership of the Tyne and Wear Museums (TWM) and his vision in overseeing the construction of full-scale on-site replica structures at South Shields and Wallsend. The following chapter by Jonathan Mckelvey reflects on the work of TWM Archaeology as a developer-funded unit on and around Hadrian's

Wall including Iron Age, Anglo-Saxon and later medieval sites. Paul Bidwell's impressive bibliography from 1973 to 2021 then fills six pages listing articles, book chapters and monographs. David Heslop subsequently provides a useful background to the often overlooked pre-Roman Iron Age and Late Bronze Age settlements in lowland north-east England.

A section headed 'Studies in material and scientific evidence' brings together an interesting diversity of subject matter, beginning with the intriguingly entitled 'A small forest of pines; pinecone motifs in Romano-British Sculpture' by Lindsay Allason-Jones. This considers the association of pinecones as free-standing items or as decorations on tomb monuments associated with Attis and life after death, found largely in military associations. Richard Brickstock then follows with 'Paying the army: thoughts on the *Annona Militaris* and the supply of goods to the northern frontier in Britain', with particular emphasis on what can be learned from coins from Corbridge. The next two chapters are related as they consider pottery supply on the northern frontier, Alex Croom in 'Pot mends and repaired pottery from South Shields Roman Fort' and Geoffrey B Dannell and Allard W Mees, 'Interpreting the Samian stamps from South Shields and the supply-chain to Hadrian's Wall and the hinterland forts'. Both are detailed, comprehensive and make a useful contribution to Roman pottery studies. Stephen Greep then provides some insight into leisure time in Roman Britain through a detailed and well researched account of composite bone dice.

There has been longstanding debate about the function of Hadrian's Wall, and Bill Griffiths contributes to this through a programme of experimental archaeology comparing the effectiveness of various weapons such as slings and javelins and their relationship with the Wall and its defensive outworks. Excavations on a Roman fort at Doune near Stirling produced a copper alloy strap junction embellished with red glass decorated in a style of Celtic art more akin to that of southern Britain than to northern frontier. Fraser Hunter presents a hypothesis that the owner of this article was recruited in the south before serving on the northern frontier. This section concludes with a chapter by Marijke van der Veen entitled 'Crop prevalence and surplus production in Roman and medieval Northeast England', which demonstrates clear changes in cereal cultivation choice through the Roman and into the Anglo-Saxon period.

The next section, simply entitled 'Southern Britain', provides a reminder of Paul Bidwell's

interest in bath-houses and his earlier career in Devon, with chapters by Michael Fulford on 'Failed and failing bath-houses in late first century Britain', Neil Holbrook on 'The public baths of Cirencester: antiquarian records and modern interpretation' and Frances Griffith on 'Forty years on: some Roman placenames of South West England four decades after Rivet and Smith'. Stephen J Kaye and John Pamment Salvatore then demonstrate the importance of understanding the impact of landscape change in a chapter entitled 'Research on the effects of relative sea-level change on the River Exe estuary in the mid-1st century: implications for the location of Roman sea-port and barge-quay facilities serving the Neronian fortress of Legio II Augusta at Exeter'.

The next section, devoted to antiquarian matters, gives a fascinating insight on how Hadrian's Wall and its environs were viewed in the past. Visitors to the Wall are often shocked that large sections have been quarried away, and the paintings discussed by David Breeze provide an invaluable insight into what has been lost, particularly around Walltown Crags. This is followed by a forensic examination by Roger Miket of a spectacularly ornate cabinet once owned by John Collingwood Bruce, a great pioneer of Hadrian's Wall studies. It is embellished with coins from Coventina's well and once surmounted by an eagle, part of which was claimed to have been constructed with timbers extracted from Newcastle's Roman bridge, now refuted by carbon-14 dating and dendrochronology. Tony Wilmott then compares and contrasts Hadrian's Wall 'travelogs' by William Hutton and John Skinner in 1801, the remarkable Hutton, aged 78, walking all the way to the northern frontier from Birmingham!

The penultimate section concerns the Roman military North, with chapters by Rob Collins on 'The culture of command in the 4th and 5th centuries in northern Britannia', a useful insight into the later Roman army, Richard Hingley, who in his chapter 'Hadrian and the Ocean' considers the symbolic significance of water, Oceanus and Neptune, and Nick Hodgson, who in 'The art of the *mensores*: the design of the Roman forts at Wallsend and South Shields' reminds us that each fort was planned independently and the idea of mindless military conservatism must be debunked. One of the puzzles of Corbridge is Site XI, which, Alistair McCluskey argues in the next chapter, provided a tempting target for a barbarian incursion in the AD 180s, and this theme of military threat is reprised by Matthew Symonds as being one of the main reasons for the construction of Hadrian's Wall in the first place.

Far from being simply a customs barrier it was, Symonds proposes, a response to episodes of violence in AD 117–19 and 121–2 that necessitated Hadrian's presence. Symonds also argues that the Wall was not simply an imposition but showed strategic understanding of the landscape. In the previous chapters, John Poulter discusses by careful analysis of LiDAR imagery the way the Stanegate crossed the North Tyne, while Margaret Snape examines the decline of fort *vici* and evidence for markets within the forts themselves, using South Shields and Newcastle as case studies. The section ends with Pete Wilson's reflection on Cade's Road and the forts south of the Hadrianic frontier such as Piercebridge, and the need to protect the growing prosperity of the Tees Valley with its villas and major settlement at Sedgfield.

The final section of the book takes us to Dacia, where Eduard Nemeth discusses military activities at its western frontier, to the Kingdom of Kush, where Derek A Welsby and Isabella Welsby Sjöström demonstrate the reach of Rome beyond its frontiers in their examination of tile kiln construction and, finally, Everett L Wheeler considers Constantine's plans purportedly written by the emperor himself for a surprise attack on the Persians preserved in the *In De Magistratibus* by the Lydian antiquarian and administrator John Lydus (c AD 490–565).

The editors should be congratulated for corraling such eminent authors, many of whom provided important new insights into life on the Roman frontiers, and for the quality of their editing. Once again Archaeopress have produced an attractive, well illustrated volume, which I strongly recommend.

PETER HALKON 

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The Staffordshire Hoard: an Anglo-Saxon treasure. Edited by CHRIS FERN, TANIA DICKINSON and LESLIE WEBSTER, Pp xxxv + 586, 314 figs, 32 tabs. Research Report of the Society of Antiquaries of London 80, Society of Antiquaries of London, London, 2019. ISBN 9781527233508. £49.95 (hbk).

Every few years major new discoveries are made in archaeology that cause the scholarly equivalent of an earthquake. Early medieval archaeology has been graced with a series of discoveries of such phenomenal opulence that