

The final chapter on ‘The Great Disentanglement’ returns to catastrophe, arguing that the loss of technological knowledge cast a long shadow in Britain. However, although the period must have been one of ‘distressing dislocation’ (p. 184) for the 15 per cent whose subsistence was based on surpluses produced by others, those others were adopting farming practices that suited their own needs rather than the needs of another group.

This is an important (and very readable) book, although many may not agree with everything in it. It is refreshing to see a book on ‘the end’ that successfully transcends a range of disciplinary boundaries and that exploits a wide range of archaeological evidence in ways that are sometimes innovative and never less than stimulating. Hopefully it will inspire a generation of scholars to look at the period and its material evidence with fresh eyes.

University of Nottingham

will.bowden@nottingham.ac.uk

WILL BOWDEN

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Silchester Revealed. The Iron Age and Roman Town of Calleva. By M. Fulford. Windgather Press, Oxford and Philadelphia, 2021. Pp. xviii + 206, illus. Price £16.99 (pbk); £34.99 (hbk). ISBN 9781911188834 (pbk); 9781914427084 (hbk).

As an urban history, *Silchester Revealed* joins a well-established genre of writing on the Roman world; its relative brevity and intended wide audience mean that the argument is painted in quite bold strokes. Kings, emperors and would-be emperors shape ancient *Calleva*, while the modern ruins under the changing seasons are vividly evoked. The illustrations’ abundance and sharpness put academic presses to shame. Succinct explanation of methodological changes in archaeological fieldwork, as applied or trialled at Silchester, enhances the volume’s value for a non-specialist readership (ch. 1). In place of references a short afterword links the narrative to key sources. The book’s principal content foregrounds the fruits of research conducted by the author and his collaborators from 1974 onwards on monuments and houses within the town, alongside the geophysical survey by Creighton and Fry. Into the framework provided by these results evidence documented by previous scholarship is selectively integrated. The volume reveals the time depth masked by the often reproduced ‘Great Plan’ of the Victorian and Edwardian excavators, fills many of its ‘gaps’ with timber buildings they overlooked, and foregrounds the agents who shaped the town and lived within it in a dynamic narrative. For a specialist readership, *Silchester Revealed* signposts key insights of the last half-century’s research, including eight Britannia monographs (of the 33 so far published). Given Silchester’s long prominence as an exemplary Roman town, from studies of Roman urbanism to school syllabi, this book will find a resonance well beyond scholarship on Britannia.

Whereas Boon’s 1974 *Silchester* devoted few pages to change over time, the bulk of *Silchester Revealed* is organised chronologically in eight chapters spanning the city’s six-century existence. Founded in 20–10 B.C., with residential compounds laid out on a grid surrounded by earthworks, Silchester came into being as an entrepôt, channelling insular resources to Roman military consumers via Gallic intermediaries (ch. 2). After a brief episode as a possible centre of resistance, Roman authority left its mark on the town (ch. 3), first as a communications hub for military administration, then under imperial ownership. The ‘Nero project’ – the emperor’s name and titles are recorded on tiles from the town, a one-off for Britain – stamped imperial authority on Calleva through monumental buildings including a bath house and amphitheatre. Transition to self-governing urban status under the Flavian emperors (ch. 4) was marked by a street grid proper, monumentally engineered, and public buildings including a forum-basilica, *mansio*, new baths and temples. By the mid-second century (ch. 5), competitive investment by municipal elites saw these buildings and larger houses rebuilt in masonry, the city’s population reaching c. 7,000. Late in the same century, an earthwork circuit was the last major public structure to be added, replaced in stone in c. A.D. 260–280, a much more resource-intensive undertaking (ch. 6). Contemporary with the walls came new uses for the forum-basilica, now accommodating metalworking alongside feasting and either market or tax-collection activity. Fourth-century Calleva (chs 7–8) saw masonry town houses proliferate alongside smaller timber buildings with the population size remaining close to that of the second century, a possible church being a rare new public building. Traces of subsequent activity are difficult to date (ch. 9), including the famous Ogham stone, but by the seventh century Silchester’s marginal position vis-à-vis Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had relegated it to irrelevance.

The attribution of Silchester's shaping to specific powerful actors known from historical sources – ten men and one woman (Boudica) – who bolster authority claims through Roman-style public building, is probably the most controversial element of the book. This is the Calleva animated in reconstructions by Lapper (e.g. fig. 6.8) and Urmiston (e.g. fig. 5.3), foregrounding urban monuments amid a cityscape of terracotta roofs. But the workaday town evoked in other reconstructions by Matthews, especially the patched and thatched houses of Insula IX and environs (e.g. fig. 7.10), receives equal attention. The scrutiny of house forms is complemented by extensive characterisation of their material fabric. Investigation of artefact and environmental assemblages, complemented by biomolecular analysis, illuminates the lives of Callevans and elicits their inequalities. The road-hub location gave Silchester's townsfolk access to more diverse food resources than most Romano-Britons, exemplified in the botanical assemblage from Insula IX, but animal bone assemblages from the same insula, compared to those from the forum-basilica, reveal quite variable access to animal protein. Examination of faunal remains also informs understanding of urban household rituals at Calleva, especially the likely sacrifices represented by 'structured deposits' of animals and whole objects. One lacuna remains the cemeteries. Their topography is plausibly established by Creighton and Fry, but without data from human skeletal materials it is hard, for example, to compare the movements of commodities Fulford maps with those of people. For the lifecourses of ordinary Callevans, women and men, we remain dependent (for the time being) on evidence by analogy from cemetery excavations in other Romano-British cities. Rather than a quibble however, a review better ends by emphasising how much of urban life in Britannia is illuminated by the 50 years of research elegantly distilled here.

King's College London
john.pearce@kcl.ac.uk

JOHN PEARCE
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Conquering the Ocean. By Richard Hingley. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022. Pp. ix + 312, illus. Price £22.99. ISBN 9780190937416.

This highly readable account of the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain seeks to synthesise recent work on classical literary references to the island with the much larger body of archaeological and epigraphic research on Roman Britain. Dedicated *in memoriam* Anthony Birley, it is underpinned by Birley's *The Roman Government of Britain* (2005) and Roger Tomlin's *Britannia Romana* (2017), while also owing much of its approach to John Creighton's work on the province. Drawing extensively on material evidence enables it to bridge somewhat the disciplinary gap between studies of Iron Age and Roman Britain, particularly for southern England but also the North and Scotland. Hingley's focus is on Rome's generals and emperors to 'return attention to the military acts and political decisions that led to the conquest itself' (p. viii), as such updating traditional perspectives on Rome's invasion and occupation. The volume, however, covers the entirety of Roman activity in the province, also including brief chapters on the post-Roman period and later reception of Roman Britain.

Hingley argues that successive Roman leaders saw the conquest of Britain as a religious as well as a military objective. Campaigning on an island set within the sacred waters of Ocean was elevated to a 'magical' act that emperors could use to increase their personal power through 'self-deification' (p. 4). More discussion of these arguments could have been included, as could the political implications for emperors faced with either maintaining the boundaries of the Empire established by Augustus, which stopped at the Rhine and the Danube, or choosing to campaign across the Ocean. Nevertheless, it is an interesting variation on the now standard explanation of conquest and occupation being driven by Roman aggression. Taking a chronological approach allows Hingley to convey effectively the intertwining of Iron Age elite strategies and Roman military leaderships, particularly for southern Britain and Gaul where attempts can be made to match individuals named in Roman literary sources with coin inscriptions and, occasionally, with inscriptions on stone.

The book is aimed at a general reader seeking a straightforward history of personages and events. Trading relationships receive little consideration, as do the traders and camp followers accompanying the army, although a section is included on Vindolanda, and there is discussion, for example, of Barates and Regina at South Shields. Taking a broad historical scope means the rich complexities of the primary evidence and