

taking on leadership roles. The congress is diverse in terms of European participation, but representation of perspectives other than those of white scholars remains an issue. The need for decolonisation of frontier studies is visible in only two congresses to date having been organised outside of Europe. Due to political uncertainties, it has never been possible to bring the congress to North Africa. With the volume of papers on Africa declining, efforts to diversify participation will be vital.

The congress has a reputation for studying the minutiae of military installations, but the volume successfully foregrounds its role in galvanising international collaboration and as a platform for heritage protection through Frontiers of The Roman Empire World Heritage Site. Modern congresses are springboards for multinational research, with impacts on international diplomacy, UNESCO nomenclature, and cultural provision for local communities. The Congress acts as a metronome of changes in the field, with recent focus on migration, mobility, deep frontiers, sexuality, appropriation of heritage, gender and imperialism reflecting issues of the modern day. It would have been interesting if the authors offered a reflection on where the research agenda of the congresses might be heading next – as the authors note, there is scope for frontier scholarship to grow its theoretical basis. This accessible and well-illustrated offering will be of value to those interested in historiography of Roman archaeology, the politics of heritage, and women’s contributions to Roman archaeology.

University of Nottingham

Anna.Walas@Nottingham.ac.uk

ANNA H. WALAS

doi: 10.1017/S0068113X24000035

© The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies

50 Finds from Somerset: Objects from The Portable Antiquities Scheme. By L. Burnett. Amberley Press, Stroud, 2023. Pp. 96, illus. Price £15.99. ISBN 9781445662367.

This short volume represents the latest instalment in the well-established ‘50 Finds’ series, with each volume celebrating 50 discoveries (from a total of over 30,000 in Somerset) recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), presented by county or by period. This book, and the series in general, is designed to appeal to a popular and amateur readership, representing a well-priced and easily accessible and attractive introduction to elements of the archaeology of Somerset. While the volume focuses on 50 individual finds, many of these are nicely contextualised, often shown against other photographic examples, which prevents in most cases this being a ‘beauty show’ of attractive artefacts.

A short introductory chapter describes the discovery, reporting and analysis of finds recorded by the PAS, which is followed by an attractively illustrated section on Somerset’s Landscape. Although brief, this chapter aims to present Somerset’s diverse landscape, which it summarises well. The chapter presents a map presenting the distribution of all finds recorded by PAS in Somerset, which, it is argued, suggests that settlement favoured the boundaries between areas of high terrain and lowlands. This may in general be the case, particularly for more recent periods, although the short discussion does not account for nuances that can affect the distribution of artefacts, including constraints on metal-detecting, such as the distribution of arable land and woodland, and restrictions (generally not permitted within Exmoor National Park, for instance), nor that the settlement pattern may have changed over time, particularly in later prehistory, as a result of the impacts of deforestation, intensive agriculture and climate change (though this is hinted at in Chapter 4). Nevertheless, the chapter forms a useful backdrop to the rest of the volume.

The subsequent six chapters present the 50 selected artefacts conventionally, by period, before concluding with three final sections, each a page long, presenting a ‘Conclusion’, ‘Useful Sources’ and ‘Information about The PAS’. The period-based chapters are well balanced, providing in general a solid, regional contextual background of the periods before specific finds are introduced. Given that most finds reported to the PAS are metal artefacts found by metal-detector users, Burnett has done a commendable job in ensuring that earlier prehistory is not neglected. As might be expected given the abundance of Roman period metal finds in the archaeological record, Chapter 5 ‘Roman (AD 43–410)’ forms a substantial component.

The volume is written in a personal way, for example ‘when this was brought in for recording I hoped the iron pan might have preserved some of the organic handle so arranged to have it X-rayed’, and I felt this

narrative approach assisted in the book's accessibility for amateur readers. The volume is very well illustrated throughout with photographs of artefacts, although in some cases reconstruction drawings for incomplete objects would aid the uninitiated reader to gain an appreciation of the original appearance of an artefact, particularly for horse harness and stirrup accessories presented on pages 59–60. As an archaeologist, I would also prefer to see a scale shown against the artefacts, although I can understand the decision not to include one for purposes of space and aesthetics, and the length (or diameter in the case of coins) is provided in a summary box for each of the 50 selected finds.

One area I feel that the volume would have benefited from substantially is a short section, perhaps in the 'Landscape' chapter, describing the historical development of the county, particularly regarding temporal geopolitical changes. Modern administrative boundaries would, of course, have been unrecognisable to prehistoric and Roman inhabitants of the region. This is hinted at occasionally (e.g. reference to the territory of the Durotriges based upon Iron Age coin distributions in Chapter 4), although an explicit statement about the changing nature of territory and administrative boundaries over time would assist the casual reader. Given multiple references to the Durotriges, a map plotting their postulated territory would also have been beneficial. Given the intended audience, brief references to external geopolitical territories such as the Danelaw would have benefited from further explanation, and I find it odd that while the Danelaw is mentioned, the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Wessex (of which modern Somerset was a part) is not, despite reference to King Alfred.

However, as a book aimed to introduce the amateur reader to the types of objects characteristic of each of the main periods of Somerset's history, the volume presents a well-contextualised, very attractive and affordable introductory guide.

Cotswold Archaeology

tom.brindle@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

TOM BRINDLE

doi: 10.1017/S0068113X24000047

© The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies

Drawings of Roman Mosaics in the Topham Collection, Eton College Library. By P. Witts. BAR international series 3064. BAR Publishing, Oxford, 2021. Pp. xvi + 193, illus. Price £48. ISBN 9781407358987 (pbk); 9781407358994 (PDF eBook).

Spectacle and Display: A Modern History of Britain's Roman Mosaic Pavements. By M. Dawson. Archaeopress Roman archaeology 79. Archaeopress, Oxford, 2021. Pp. vi + 246, illus. Price £40. ISBN 9781789698312 (pbk); 9781789698329 (PDF eBook).

The history of the recording and display of mosaics is a fascinating subject and two very different books have considerably contributed to our understanding. Michael Dawson's book is quite far-ranging, looking at the changing attitudes towards mosaics and their display from the sixteenth century to the present day, while Patricia Witts focuses microscopically on one important collection of mosaic drawings.

Patricia Witts' research into Roman mosaics has involved her delving into various archives and illuminating in print the early recording of mosaics, and this work on the mosaic drawings and prints in the Topham Collection is particularly noteworthy. The life of Richard Topham (1671–1730) and how his vast collection of drawing and prints, etc., including those featuring mosaics, came to be in Eton College library are examined in Chapter 2. The mosaics featured in the collection, all illustrated in colour where appropriate, are mostly those displayed or found in and around Rome during Topham's lifetime. His principal artists were Francesco Bartoli (1670–1733), whose works are considered in Chapters 3–4, and Gaetano Piccini (1681–1736), in Chapter 5. While Bartoli's paintings are mostly versions of earlier ones, Piccini drew mosaics found near Rome, now lost, and are the only record of them. They were illustrated as if the artist were copying a painting rather than a mosaic, sometimes with a grid reflecting tessellation but not accurately representing it. The lives and techniques of these and the other artists represented are examined in Chapter 9. Each painting is described minutely, its subject matter examined and its importance assessed. The work ends with a detailed catalogue, including a bibliography for each entry, index and eight appendices tabulating various aspects of the paintings.