but also suggests that it was indeed constructed late in the building programme. A further detail is that the foundations and lowest course of the Wall appear to have been built in lengths of 30 Roman feet.

A strength of Bidwell's reports is his re-examination of earlier relevant excavations. Here, it is his observations on the records relating to F G Simpson's 1929 investigation of the relationship between the Wall and the west gate of the fort. Bidwell's conclusion is that the gate was erected with a wing wall laid on a single course of foundations, and therefore in advance of the Wall itself. It is through such observations, ancient as well as modern, that we can understand the building process better and through that obtain an appreciation not just of the way that the Wall was constructed but the sequence of building, which in turn help us to understand the priorities of the builders and the significance of the changes in plan.

The section of the Wall west of Wallsend was erected over a valley, which led to the repeated collapse and rebuilding of the superstructure, an indication of the determination of the Roman army to maintain the Wall as a barrier. This was underlined by the discovery of two phases of pits on the berm, presumably to hold obstacles such as sharpened branches. By way of contrast, the discovery and excavation of an aqueduct, an extremely rare survival in the western provinces, bringing water to the fort's bath-house from north of the ditch and the examination of fields dating to the third century, also to the north of the Wall, are reminders that the linear barrier was not a great divide.

The erection of a replica stretch of the Wall in 1993/4 was preceded by a rigorous examination of the available evidence, detailed in the report. The discussion includes consideration of the evidence for the top of the Wall. A decision could not be fudged, and it was decided to provide the replica with a wall-walk, which at least has the advantage of providing visitors with a viewing platform. This was provided with a forward parapet. Modern health and safety considerations have resulted in the placing of a metal railing on the south side of the wall-walk; Roman soldiers would doubtless have welcomed such an addition, considering that any patrolling would have taken place at least 3.6m above the ground.

This is not just an excavation report, important as that is, but a wider consideration of the significance of the results and their relevance to other parts of Hadrian's Wall. It should be on the bookshelves of everyone interested in Roman frontiers.

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Britannia Romana: Roman inscriptions and Roman Britain. By ROGER TOMLIN. 240mm. Pp xvi + 472, ills. Oxbow Books, Oxford and Philadelphia, 2017. ISBN 9781785707001. £48 (hbk).

This magnificent volume covers little short of 500 epigraphic texts relevant to the history of Roman Britain, mostly inscriptions cut on stone, but also some lead curse tablets (wooden stylus writing tablets originally covered in wax) legible because the stylus has scored the wood beneath the wax coating, and other wooden tablets written on in ink. There are also five military diplomas and a few other inscribed objects.

The work commences with a short preface that records the author's debt to numerous scholars especially Robin Burn – A R Burn, the author of *The Romans in Britain* (1969), a collection of epigraphic texts and translations. This is followed by an introduction discussing lettering, spacing between words (or lack thereof), abbreviations, dating and the use of consular dates and imperial titles. Then there is a section on damage to inscriptions. The introduction finishes with a section on the editorial conventions used by Tomlin. These are basically simplified versions of those used in epigraphic publications, but the transcripts of his texts are given simply in lower case and he does not use capitals for monumental inscriptions.

The work as a whole concludes with a number of lists and indices: abbreviations and bibliography with twenty-two items by Tomlin himself; photo credits – it should be said here that many of the inscriptions are illustrated by small black and white photographs, though these often do not do justice to the texts themselves; concordance tables giving the items included by Tomlin and primary places of publication, such as Collingwood and Wright's *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (1965, 1990–5), Keppie's *Inscribed and Sculptured Stones* (1998) and Tomlin's *Roman London's First Voices* (2016); a list of locations of inscriptions; and finally a somewhat simplified index divided into three parts: 1) persons, 2) geographical and 3) general.

Turning to the main body of the work, the actual inscriptions and epigraphic texts, the

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material is divided into fourteen numbered sections, themselves split into subsections. The main sections are: the Invasion of Britain in AD 43 and subsequent military operations (sections 1–4); Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall (sections 5–6); the later second and early third centuries (sections 7–8); such topics as soldier and civilian, administration, the economy and religion (sections 9–12) – which together cover approximately half the entries – and the final two sections (13 and 14), which return to the historical order and cover the third and fourth centuries. Items selected by Tomlin for inclusion are designated by main section number, and then numerically, so '4.19' as quoted below means the nineteenth text in section 4, a system that is simple and works well. One difficulty that Tomlin faced will have been to decide into which section to put some of the items – thus the famous writing tablet from Vindolanda (4.19) written by Claudia Severa, the wife of the commanding officer, to Sulpicia Lepidina, the wife of a fellow officer, is given in a sub section on Vindolanda in main section 4 – an early chronological section preceding the section devoted to Hadrian's Wall – whereas it would have been tempting to put it in section 9 (Soldier and Civilian in the subsection entitled 'equestrian officers and their families').

There is only one case where this reviewer disagrees with Tomlin's interpretation and that is the inscription round the mouth of the Ilam Staffordshire cup (5.16), and Tomlin's taking the name Aelii with Valli – 'the Wall of Aelius', ie of Hadrian, while it almost certainly goes with Draconis '(the property) of Aelius Draco'. For this name, possibly the same man, see Henzen *et al* (1886, 2,050), Rome *T Aelius Aug. lib Draco*. Of course any second edition of *Britannia Romana* would also include inscriptions found after Tomlin's closing date of 2014, such as the inscription from Dorchester (Tomlin 2018), the tombstone of a veteran of Legion II Augusta comparable to the tombstone of the Veteran of the same legion from Alchester, Oxon (2.03), and, like that, useful in tracing the changing location of the legion in the first years of the Roman occupation.

In conclusion it is often said that there are too many books on Roman Britain and readers – and possibly reviewers! – may well agree. However, if this statement is limited to books based on the historical or epigraphic source or one confined to the historical sources themselves, this is certainly not true; and it is hard to conceive of any other writer who would have the knowledge to produce a work like *Britannia Romana* or one who would have had the ability to have read texts like the Bloomberg documents or lead curse tablets from Bath or Uley in the first place.

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The Emergence of the English. By Susan Oosthuizen. Past Imperfect. 180mm. Pp viii + 140, 7 figs. ARC Humanities Press, Leeds, 2019. ISBN 9781641891271. £16.95 (pbk).