new sites, and revealed important complexities in processes of colonisation, interaction and cultural diversification, as summarised by Bedford and Spriggs (Chapter 8). But, as they note, for many locations in the western Pacific knowledge is biased towards the early record and more work needs to be done connecting early sites to subsequent changes and the emergence of modern sociocultural forms. In Fiji, Tonga and Samoa this comparative lack of later evidence has provoked debate about processes of cultural transformation. Cochrane's chapter on Fiji makes a case for the refinement of archaeological theory to better differentiate between alternative explanations.

Elsewhere, in the more recently settled regions of East Polynesia and parts of Micronesia, archaeologists have developed relatively detailed sequences of sociocultural transformation. Sections in following chapters on Palau, Yap, Pohnpei, central East Polynesia, Hawaii, Rapa Nui and New Zealand all cover drivers of change post-colonisation. There is a recurring theme of interactions between environmental productivity, population growth, intensification of production and resource conflict, prompting different responses in social organisation and emerging hierarchy and inequality. Rapa Nui (Easter Island), whose famous statuary graces the cover of the book, epitomises the way archaeologists and other social theorists have utilised Pacific Island exemplars in debates about these issues. Hunt and Lipo (Chapter 19) critique earlier neo-Malthussian allegories that posited the island's population outgrew its resources, burning through a productive environment in pursuit of monumental aggrandisements, before collapsing into warring bands of survivors. They point out large evidential gaps in this model, and propose that, rather than collapse, the population developed sustainable strategies for survival in an always resource poor environment. Their explanation for the massive statues is a Hobbesian retort to Malthus: they were a form of 'costly signalling' that mitigated violent competition – veritable Leviathans promoting the benefits of group membership and collective projects for long-term survival.

Enlightenment-era obsessions clearly still haunt Oceanic archaeology, but what about indigenous perspectives on the past? Christophe Sand (Chapter 9), in his summary of New Caledonia, provides an important discussion of how modern archaeology in the Pacific exists in dialogue with other ways of knowing and constructing the past, local political and economic concerns in developing post-colonial nations, and its own at times problematic history. But, for now at least, this dialogue has not dramatically reshaped archaeological enquiry in the region. Nevertheless, the variety of issues and perspectives covered in this book is impressive, and it is perhaps testament to the vibrancy of archaeology in Oceania that coverage is not able to be entirely comprehensive. It is an excellent introduction to contemporary research in the region and will serve as a useful reference text for students, teachers and others with an interest in the long-term history of the Pacific.

TIM THOMAS

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Hadrian's Wall at Wallsend. By PAUL BIDWELL, with contributions from R BRICKSTOCK, A CROOM, J C COULSTON, B DICKINSON, D DUNGWORTH, K HARTLEY, D HESLOP, P HILL, E A LAYCOCK, J PRICE, A SAGE, M E SNAPE, R S O TOMLIN and S WORRELL. Pp xvi + 262, CD, 139 col and b&w ills, diagrams and maps. Arbeia Society Roman Archaeological Studies 1, South Shields, 2018. ISBN 9781527229969. £35 (pbk).

'It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.' Arthur Conan Doyle's attribution of this to Sherlock Holmes is as important to an archaeologist as to a detective, and this volume certainly proves the point. The core of the book is an account of the excavation of a length of 75m of Hadrian's Wall to the west of the Roman fort at Wallsend together with the associated specialist reports. The account is supplemented by discussion of earlier records and other recent excavations in the area as well as a report on the reconstruction of a section of the Wall. This is the most detailed published account to date of any stretch of Hadrian's Wall and sets the standard for all future reports.

Hadrian's Wall was originally planned to be about 10 Roman feet (2.96m) wide. During its construction, however, it was reduced in thickness by at least 2ft (60cm). Where the Wall has been examined throughout its 5km from Newcastle to Wallsend, it is always this narrower width. This led to the statement in 1930 that this eastern end was a later addition to the frontier, perhaps better expressed as being built late in the programme. The drawing together of all the modern excavations in this stretch has led to the dramatic discovery that whereas the foundations of the Wall everywhere else were only one layer deep, here two were laid. This not only emphasises the unique nature of this stretch,

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.

DAVID BREEZE

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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