

c. AD 450 are well known, we need to allow the evidence from individual sites to speak. The late Roman phase 7 (AD 300–410) is dismissed as ‘decline’ (p. 102), yet quarrying, pitting and refuse disposal attest to activity. Unless we try to understand what this activity was we will never come closer to understanding late Roman London.

More generally, this volume asks us to look around and question what is the purpose of archaeological publication. Recent decades have seen a drive towards synthesis, but this seems to be a pseudonym for ‘publication lite’. Commercial contractors want to publish and in some cases they need to publish for financial reasons; there is also a great temptation to put words between hardcovers to produce a volume that appears fine and satisfies the client’s demands. The value of an archaeological monograph, however, lies not in its appearance but in its usefulness. If you want to delve no further than worrying about how roundhouses became strip buildings then this report is perfectly adequate. For anything more detailed, the student and specialist alike will be left frustrated. We live and work in an imperfect world, but as a discipline and industry we can and should be able to do better with the resources available.

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BRUNO BARBER, CRAIG HALSEY, MAREK LEWCUN & CHRISTOPHER PHILPOTTS. *The evolution and exploration of the Avon flood plain at Bath and the development of the southern suburb. Excavations at Southgate, Bath, 2006–9* (Museum of London Archaeology Monograph 68). 2015. xvii+300 pages. 194 colour and b&w illustrations, 40 tables, CDROM. London: MOLA; 978-1-907586-28-6 hardback £30.

This is a very well-produced excavation report combining the necessary technical detail with a most readable text. The printing of the volume is of a high standard, with many colour illustrations. The editing, undertaken by Susan Hirst, is also excellent. The excavations described here were undertaken in advance of the redevelopment of a large area on the south side of the medieval city of Bath, Somerset, and to the south of the well-known Roman baths. The detailed evidence for the prehistoric, Roman to medieval, and post-medieval to modern periods is set



out in a series of sections devoted to the archaeological sequence followed in turn by a very useful series of thematic discussions, again arranged by period. Accompanying the report is a CD containing detailed data, including a catalogue of selected glass items, extensive geo-archaeological data, plots of the

distribution of the Mesolithic artefacts and tables of data for a wide range of finds and environmental material.

The approach taken to the project as a whole is best described as visionary, setting the history and archaeology of Bath in the context of the development of the floodplain of the River Avon over 12 millennia, its beginnings extending well beyond the familiar worlds of Roman or eighteenth-century Bath. Hunter-gatherer occupation of the banks of the River Avon between c. 9000 and 7000 BP was characterised by a spread of more than 16 000 lithic artefacts—“unusual if not unique” (p. 178). Evidence, by contrast, for the Roman period was disappointingly slight, and missing from the report is any discussion of Gerrard’s (2007) research establishing a late fifth-century date for the demolition of the Temple of Sulis Minerva. One senses that the excavators had possibly hoped that this would be an area of cemeteries or settlement to the south of the Roman baths. Similarly, it might have been hoped that archaeological investigation would provide good evidence for the character of the Saxon and medieval suburbs to the south of the walled town. In fact, excavation “produced no definitive evidence for the function of specific buildings” (p. 189). The thematic discussion of the medieval period necessarily focuses mainly on environmental archaeology and the evidence for diet and economy.

The thematic discussion of the post-medieval and modern periods is one of the strongest sections of the report, with much useful correlation of the documentary and archaeological evidence. Particularly interesting sections are those examining the evidence for the Civil War defences of the

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seventeenth century and the development of pipe making on a large scale at the north end of Southgate Street in the early eighteenth century. There is much scope here for the historian of consumerism in Bath to make use of the data obtained from the archaeological excavations in Southgate Street, ranging from ceramics, clay tobacco pipes and pipeclay wig curlers to toothbrushes and glass. The thorough and detailed reports on particular categories of finds will make this a very useful report for historical archaeologists in Britain, North America and elsewhere. Particularly noteworthy are the well-researched and excellently written reports on the medieval and post-medieval pottery and glass by Nigel Jeffries and Lyn Blackmore respectively.

This volume is number 68 in the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) monograph series. Collectively, these monographs are a remarkable record of that organisation's timely publication of archaeological excavations, not often matched elsewhere. This particular volume is dedicated to the memory of two of the contributors, Richard Bluer and Christopher Philpotts, who together with another of the contributors, Geoff Eagan, died before its completion. We can presume that all three would have been well pleased with the final report.

Reference

GERRARD, J. 2007. The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath and the end of Roman Britain. *Antiquaries Journal* 87: 148–164.

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CATHERINE HILLS & SAM LUCY. *Spong Hill IX: chronology and synthesis*. 2013. xv+479 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, and tables. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; 978-1-902937-62-5 hardback £59.

Spong Hill, located near North Elmham, Norfolk, is the first cremation cemetery in East Anglia to have been fully excavated. By the authors' reckoning, it is also the largest cremation cemetery to have been studied in the UK, and the high standard maintained by the archaeological team under the direction of Catherine Hills and others has yielded



a wealth of data to scholars of the migration period. Digging campaigns from 1972 and 1981, which followed a trial season in 1968, brought to light a total of 2383 cremations

and 57 inhumations mostly from the fifth but also the sixth century. These figures do not include the many burials thought to have been recovered, damaged or destroyed by earlier excavations, digging and ploughing of the site. This synthetic volume, which offers an up-to-date analysis of the data and hypothesises the relative and absolute chronologies of the graves, is a welcome addition to existing publications that have inventoried the remains found at the site, explored an associated settlement and assessed some of the unique features of the cemetery.

The volume is dense reading but highly informative, and includes a wealth of detailed tables, maps and appendices for anyone interested in conducting additional analysis on the raw data. Catherine Hills and Sam Lucy should also be applauded for making good use of continental scholarship on artefact typologies central to their interest in measuring migration, spatial and social patterning, and gender- and age-associations of goods included in cremation and inhumation graves. To assist with the challenge of dealing with materials that in many cases have undergone the effects of burning on cremation pyres along with the bodies they accompanied, additional contributors intervene with analyses at various points in the volume. These supplementary essays include detailed assessments of ceramic stamps and bone and antler artefacts, in addition to the application of correspondence analysis to expand the quantity of potentially datable cremation graves at this complex cemetery. They also make it clear that Spong Hill was not as isolated a feature in the landscape as once thought: although Spong Hill appears to have been the earliest, appearing in the early fifth century, several other cemeteries were established in the vicinity while the site was still in use.

In the course of the volume, the authors convincingly demonstrate that cremation graves are not in fact all that different from contemporary inhumation graves. Families no doubt laid their dead to rest