

identify and study a glass assemblage. While there are regional variations in vessel forms, most of the material presented here will be relevant to people working in the other north-western provinces, and much of it to those working in the south-western ones as well.

The book is copiously illustrated with clear line drawings and colour photographs that allow even a novice to see what is meant by the technical terms used to describe such phenomena as rim and base finishes, colour and so on. Understanding these is the key to being able to identify and date Roman glass vessels, and this is an extremely useful resource to have available. The illustrations have very full captions presented in both German and English, making them accessible to people who do not speak German. Forms are illustrated both as the fragments normally encountered and as complete examples, which again will be very helpful to novices. As well as the coverage of the forms, there are considerations of manufacturing debris, how the vessels were made and decorated, how to distinguish between Roman and modern glass fragments (not always easy!) and how to date them. Useful closed, dated groups are described and illustrated, and an attempt to compare the use of vessel glass at Augst to other sites in Switzerland is made. Volume 1 concludes with a full description of all the types found with their dating both at Augst and elsewhere, their distribution and references to other useful works which discuss each form. The second volume presents the detailed catalogue and illustrations. As is normal for an Augst publication, the catalogue very helpfully includes information about the date of the context in which a piece has been found, derived from the other material in it.

This book cannot be praised too highly, and Sylvia Fünfschilling and her colleagues are to be commended in having had the vision to publish this body of material in a way that is useful not only to the most specialised glass scholar, but also to people who know nothing about the subject but would like to.

Degryse, P (ed) 2014. *Glass Making in the Greco-Roman World*, Leiden University Press, Leiden

Rütti, B 1991. *Die römischen Gläser aus Augst und Kaideraugst*, Forschungen in Augst 13, Augst

Scatozza Höricht, L A 2012. *L'Instrumentum Vitreum di Pompei*, Aracne editrice, Rome

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*Alien Cities. Consumption and the Origins of Urbanism in Roman Britain*. By DOMINIC PERRING and MARTIN PITTS. 300mm. Pp xx + 267, 200 ills (some col), maps, plans. Spoilheap Monograph 7, Portslade, 2013. ISBN 9780955884696. £30 (pbk).

This book is an important study, encouraged by English Heritage, of the potential of using archival material from excavations, especially rescue work, surveys and the Portable Antiquities Scheme, on a large scale and in an analytical way. The analysis of the data draws on the experience of numerous specialists who contribute chapters to this volume. It seeks to update and add new dimensions to our understanding of the development of towns in Roman Britain through their relationship with surrounding rural and other settlements and pre-Roman settlement. Its focus is to use the material to investigate, compare and categorise settlements in terms of patterns of consumption relying on the artefact record to do this. The datasets of finds consisted of coins, pottery, glass, animal bones and registered finds and the sites themselves consisted of thirty-nine identified settlements in south-east England.

One of the key results of the data analysis has been to demonstrate how different the early towns of Colchester and London were from the surrounding settlements in terms of material compositions and this has encouraged the concept of 'Alien Cities'; their different pottery, food and small-finds assemblages representing the nature of their origins, populations and supply. While the wealth of information described about these two settlements is endlessly fascinating, it could be argued that the archaeology of these two sites is already relatively well known. The analysis, however, is able to suggest new interpretations for such areas as Sheepen in Colchester (p 245) and contribute to the continuing debate on the foundation of London. The book emphasises the presence of an early fortress at London, but there continues to be much controversy and uncertainty about this, as represented by alternative studies and publications. The analysis by the pottery specialist is not so supportive of military origins (p 134).

Perhaps of even more value in the volume is the wealth of information it offers about other types of settlement sites in the countryside, which have perhaps not been dealt with in as much detail elsewhere. Their distinction from the towns is marked in the early Roman period, but the emphasis is on the second century when the style of assemblages becomes more similar, though

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with continued differences reflecting the nature and functions of the different sites. One issue with the study and categorisation of sites in this way, however, might be that it applies modern perspectives of status, wealth and value onto the way in which we interpret these sites and landscapes.

The book is very descriptive in terms of sites and data and perhaps some of this material could have been placed in an appendix allowing for more analysis and interpretation in the main text. It is one of the powerful strengths of this project that observations can be made through the use of large datasets. Objects can bring settlements to life and there is considerable opportunity to develop the theoretical perspectives of interpretation. Even what might be regarded as simple observations, such as pottery lids present at certain sites compared with others (p 161), could be used to evoke different experiences, domestic lives and life styles. It is here that there could perhaps be more engagement with tackling the complexities of the relationships between humans, things, buildings and landscapes, and also the difficulties with identity itself and interpreting tribal identities. This might be key to addressing social organisations and relationships in the immediate pre-Roman to early Roman periods. Likewise, the biography of things, including coins, may be more complex than simply their assumed functional usage, which might have had an impact on their distributions and findspots. The book in many ways relies on a very conventional way of reconstructing Roman Britain.

*Alien Cities* offers numerous gems of information that will be invaluable for future studies on, and syntheses of, Roman Britain. It also offers valuable lessons and, in a way, serves as a potential guide for future projects wishing to utilise the vast wealth of data now available in archives and other databases. It demonstrates as well the difficulties and frustrations with such work and the caveats involved, but indicates the rewards of perseverance and collaboration.

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*The Towns of Roman Britain: the contribution of commercial archaeology since 1990.* Edited by MICHAEL FULFORD and NEIL HOLBROOK. 297mm. Pp xvi + 216, b&w and col ills, maps, plans. Britannia Monogr Ser 27. Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, London, 2015. ISBN 9780907764410. £28 (pbk).

The purpose of this volume is straightforward: it is to provide a synthesis and assessment of the contribution that developer-funded archaeology has made to the principal towns of Roman Britain since 1990. By 'principal' is meant towns presumed to be *coloniae*, *municipia* and *civitas* capitals. It contains eleven chapters in all, including an opening introduction by Holbrook and a concluding discussion by Fulford. London and York each get their own chapters, while the towns of the rest of England are grouped in the South-East, the South-West and the Midlands/North. There is a chapter on planning and commercial archaeology, and three thematic chapters on burial archaeology, archaeobotany and zooarchaeology.

The well-written papers summarise some of the particularly eye-catching discoveries, but also do not shy away from articulating the main structural weaknesses of commercial urban archaeology. Bryant and Thomas, in dealing with PPG 16-led archaeology, suggest that one of the greatest advances in the last quarter of a century has come not from commercial work *per se*, but from the impetus PPG 16 provided to establish better urban archaeological databases such as the Urban Archaeological Database and the Extensive Urban Survey programmes. They also note the areas where advances have been much more negligible – improving the standards of some commercial work, publication and archive deposition.

The chapter on Roman London (Perring) deals with the development of the town from much-debated military origins to late in the Roman period. It is worthy and illustrated with useful plans, but ultimately uninspiring. The questions posed are old ones, and there is little evidence that more nuanced research questions have been provoked by the data. This may well be the result of funding arrangements determined by commercial archaeology, as Perring himself suggests. The stand-out statement, however, at least for this reviewer, is that two-thirds of the important excavations undertaken of Roman London in the last twenty-five years have yet to be published in full.

For York, Ottaway remarks that the last twenty years have seen most work take place outside the historic core. There have been significant discoveries, such as the Driffeld Terrace cemetery for executed males, but environmental studies have stagnated, grey literature reports accumulate while full publication remains problematic. What is required now, Ottaway suggests, is not necessarily more fieldwork, but a project designed to harness the research