

the blood. Even the battle-hardened Goths thought this a tad much and fled the battlefield.' Well, they would do that, wouldn't they?

This book will certainly sell well to that curious niche market for books on ancient warfare, but it might not have much appeal to the academic community.

*Birmingham*

IAIN FERRIS

*Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain.* By H.E.M. Cool. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006. Pp. xvi + 282, figs 30, tables 43. Price: £55.00 (bound); £19.99 (paper). ISBN 978 0 521 80276 5 (bound); 978 0 521 00327 8 (paper).

Like the author, most of us are interested in food and drink, so this book should have wide appeal, and deservedly so. A number of books on Roman food have appeared in recent years, but this is a book with a difference. It is based, not on literary accounts and surviving recipes, but on the archaeological evidence, and the evidence for Britain, not metropolitan Rome. In her preface, Cool sounds almost apologetic for writing on so unfashionable a subject as Roman Britain. She should not apologise. The evidence available to her is peculiarly rich, extending beyond the confines of artefacts and environmental evidence to the treasure house of the Vindolanda tablets, and her masterly collation and interpretation of this evidence will be of interest to specialist and non-specialist alike.

After a brief, introductory 'Apéritif', the book falls into three main parts. The first sets out the nature of the evidence, its limitations and what we can learn from it. Chapters cover the evidence for food, its packaging, evidence for diet from human remains, and, finally, documentary sources. The second part — after a chapter on utensils for food preparation and cooking — surveys, chapter by chapter, the evidence for the various foodstuffs: contents of the store cupboard such as salt, oil and seasonings, cereals, the various types of animal and vegetable foods, and, finally, drinks. The last four chapters seek evidence for trends and alterations in attitude towards food and its consumption, by means of case-studies of different types of site — military, urban, rural, religious — in four broad chronological bands, ranging from the late pre-Roman Iron Age to the fifth century.

C.'s major source of evidence, throughout the book, lies in the specialist reports, on bones, plant remains, pottery and other artefacts, which should form a standard part of every well-published excavation report. Inevitably, the quality of both sampling strategies and methods of quantification varies between reports, and C. does not hesitate to point out shortcomings, with constructive suggestions on best practice: quantification of animal bones by skeletal zone (10) and systematic recording of sooting and burning on pottery (37), to take but two random examples. This should be essential reading for both excavation directors and specialists.

The format of the book is simple and clear, with a summary of contents to open each chapter. Illustrations are mainly by line-drawings, with data presented in tabular form. Statements and examples are qualified by Harvard references in footnotes with a full bibliography at the back. A useful Appendix lists references for the data appearing in each table. It might have been helpful, particularly to the general reader, to have had slightly more information given within the text, as, for example, by naming the sites of finds mentioned, which can only be reached through the bibliography. A case in point is fig. 15.3, showing strainers for infused drinks. The caption merely lists the references, not the findspots or the material from which each was made, nor is this information directly available in the accompanying text. The same applies to the silver spoons in fig. 19.4. Ancient sources are, for the most part, quoted via the medium of secondary works, which seems a pity, particularly where up-to-date translations are available. Occasional grammatical infelicities crop up, with sentences ending in words such as 'in' or 'of' and the omission of 'that' or 'which' in relative clauses. To the older or more pedantic reader they may jar, but do not obscure the sense. Errors and misprints are few and generally minor. On the plan of London (fig. 17.2), Victoria Station seems to have strayed somewhat! On pp. 160 and 179 'mortaria' appears to be used as a singular, though elsewhere, correctly, as a plural. 'Graffiti' (35) is also plural. While background descriptions for the general reader are admirably clear, there are occasional cases of lack of precision. Commodus (A.D. 177–192) can hardly be described as 'mid-second century' (33) and not all mortaria (samian and colour-coated ware apart) were cream (42 and 46).

Minor irritations apart, this is a ground-breaking and thought-provoking book. Owing to the shortage

of published reports with the requisite quality of information available, as is the case with sites excavated before the advent of modern sampling and quantification methods, C.'s choice of sites is limited and her analysis inevitably raises as many questions as it answers. This is particularly noticeable in the chronological chapters at the end, where the main point to emerge is the variation in attitude towards food between different groups in different areas and under different circumstances. By the end of the Roman period some more general trends may be detectable, but here, too, C. offers pointers for further work rather than categorical answers. To what extent the sites she discusses are typical, only time can decide.

One final, general, point cannot be stressed too strongly. At a time when editors appear increasingly to be adopting a policy of omitting specialist reports from their publications, or of curtailing them beyond recognition, this book comes as a shining example of how the data they contain can be used to interpret aspects of life in the past. This information, the primary evidence, must be made available, and continue to be available, in an accessible form. Without it, not only will it be impossible for future generations to reinterpret a site, but books such as this can never be written. In her 'Digestif', C.'s final wish is that in ten year's time someone else might rewrite her book in the light of new information. May her wish be granted!

*Stockport*

FELICITY WILD

*Roman Furniture*. By A.T. Croom. Tempus, Stroud, 2007. Pp. 192, col. pls 24, figs 75. Price: £18.99. ISBN 978 0 7524 4097 2.

The furniture of ancient houses is a badly neglected topic. Because most of it was made of organic materials, notably wood and (for soft furnishings) textiles, it rarely survives in the archaeological record: the bulk of our evidence comes from written sources and artistic representations. And yet an appreciation of how rooms were furnished is crucial to our understanding of life-styles. Too often we focus on mosaic pavements or painted wall-decorations and forget that these were part of a larger ensemble — and that any mosaics and paintings would have been to some extent hidden by couches, tables, stools and the like. Among the few studies devoted to ancient furniture, a fundamental contribution was made by Gisela Richter's sumptuous tome *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans*, published in 1966. For Roman Britain there was Joan Liversidge's little handbook *Furniture in Roman Britain* (1955). More recently, Stefan Mols has produced an in-depth study of the important remains of carbonised furniture at Herculaneum, *Wooden Furniture in Herculaneum: Form, Technique and Function* (1999).

Alexandra Croom's new survey fills a gap by bringing together the various forms of evidence for furniture in the Roman world. Her starting point is Roman Britain, where, as curator of the fort at South Shields, she has reconstructed several items for exhibition; but this has entailed analysing the available data from all parts of the Empire and from all kinds of sources — literary, epigraphic, artistic, and archaeological. Here, alas, C.'s lack of specialist expertise becomes a problem. While she has searched far and wide for illustrations, she is largely dependent on popular books and on surveys written in English. With a few exceptions, C. has been unable to refer to publications in foreign languages, which include not only excavation reports but also major studies such as E. Pernice's *Hellenistische Tische, Zisternenmundungen, Beckenuntersätze, Altäre und Truhen*, *Die hellenistische Kunst in Pompeji* 5 (1932). And even her coverage of publications in English is patchy: one might have expected the section on household shrines to have mentioned G.K. Boyce's *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii* (1937). In addition, C.'s unfamiliarity with Latin constantly lets her down. Singulars and plurals are used interchangeably; orthography and case-endings are frequently inaccurate; and, more damagingly, there are basic misunderstandings as to how the ancient writings should be handled. In the discussion of legal codes in the Introduction, for instance, it is misguided to quote juristic definitions of 'furniture' (15: *Digest* 33.10, not 33.7 or 33.2): the word used in the ancient texts is *suppellex*, which may have had subtle differences of meaning from the modern word. This is an important point. As with many of the Greek and Latin terms given to individual items of furniture, we cannot always be confident that we know the precise modern equivalents — or indeed that the usage of the ancient writers was consistent.

Sadly, the errors go further than those of Latin terminology. Names of places and persons are often misspelt — the same name sometimes misspelt in different ways in different passages. Generally,