

## Review

*Jason Monaghan*

Neil Holbrook and Paul T. Bidwell. Roman Finds From Exeter. *Exeter Archaeological Reports* 4. 1991. 313pp, 138 fig., 1mf.

This is a heavy, hardbacked work of scholarship which is a pleasure to give shelf space to. The book is the culmination of many years work, covering nineteen sites excavated between 1971 and 1979. Work of writing up passed from Paul Bidwell to Neil Holbrook in the mid-1980's and although admirably produced, the length of time taken for it to appear means the book is not really a product of the 1990's.

The volume covers 'finds' in general, although is dominated by the pottery report which is the only part to be considered in detail here. Some attempt is made to integrate the pottery with evidence for other classes of artifacts, most notably coins, although full advantage does not seem to have been taken of the opportunity to consider the artifactual assemblage as a whole. An example is the assertion that "...it seems probable that pottery flagons were largely superseded by glass or metal vessels..", despite there being no supporting evidence from the glass or metal finds reports.

Contributors include D.M Bailey (lamps), V. Rigby (Gallo-Belgic Wares), K.F. Hartley (mortaria), G.B. Dannell (samian), B. Dickinson (samian stamps), K. Green (early fine wares), V.G. Swan (other fine wares), D.P.S Peacock and S. Keay (amphora identification) plus many notes and comments by SGRP members. This array of specialists produces a wealth of detailed information, which is diluted somewhat by the variability in the manner of presentation and degree of discussion. Quantification methods differ between the reports and more correlation between the classes of evidence would have been appreciated.

The profusely illustrated pottery catalogue overflows with information, invaluable for understanding the development of the BB1 industries. This understanding is enhanced by the authors' familiarity with northern frontier deposits and with their wide-ranging comparative studies of sites in the South-West. The major criticism of the type series is that it not dendritic, due to its arrangement by fabric. Whilst enhancing the discussion of the various industries, this makes quick reference to forms difficult as the numbering sequence starts again at type 1 for each fabric considered.

It is nice to see quantification creeping into pottery reports, but this book shows its age on this subject, lacking any mention of EVEs. Quantification is by minimum number of vessels and weight (occasionally by sherd count), often with percentages quoted without clarifying which method is used, or qualifying which wares have been included/excluded in the count. Selective use is made of tables and seriographs throughout the report, with a few groups quantified in microfiche. More adventurous use of statistical data for interpreting and comparing individual sites would have been informative, and it is to be hoped this will be attempted in the future.

The authors recognise the criticism that the finds are divorced from their sites, but have written a very rewarding synthesis of the chronology of Exeter based on the finds. This includes a reconsideration of the occupation of the legionary fortress, setting the foundation to c AD 55-60 with the legion departing c AD 74. A useful consideration of 'trade', includes observations that the South-West has a paucity of finewares from the second century onwards.

This book is a very solid addition to the study of Romano-British pottery, and will probably remain a standard work for many years to come.