

the growing influence of the Church over land and people points towards another obvious avenue for contextualising the Romano-British child health data (116–17). A further desideratum is a gendered analysis assessing the potentially different impact of diverse living conditions on boys and girls respectively and the broader consequences for our appreciation of Romano-British society.

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The Romano-British Villa and Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Eccles, Kent. By N. Stoodley and S. Cosh. Archaeopress, Oxford, 2021. Pp. 260, illus. Price £45. ISBN 9781789695878.

Villas have attracted excavators since the very beginnings of archaeology in the eighteenth century. At Eccles, Kent, the investigation of the villa and Anglo-Saxon cemetery began in earnest in 1961 and continued, under the direction of the late Alec Detsicas, for 15 seasons. Detsicas published a detailed series of interim reports in *Archaeologia Cantiana* and sought, with the assistance of grants from the Kent Archaeological Society, to complete the post-excavation study of the site and bring it to publication. Alas, the task was too great and, recognising this, Detsicas passed the excavation archive to the Canterbury Archaeological Trust. That the volume under review has been published stands as a tribute to Detsicas's work. We should also acknowledge the extensive efforts of Nick Stoodley, Stephen Cosh and their contributors, who have taken on the most thankless of archaeological tasks: writing up an old and orphaned excavation.

Stoodley and Cosh are both at pains to emphasise that the volume is not and could not be a traditional excavation report (p. 6). Work on the archive is too incomplete. Instead, we are presented with a work in three parts. The first, excluding preliminaries, comprises a detailed discussion and appraisal of the architectural development of the villa by Cosh (ch. 3). The 64 pages, with copious plans, provide a narrative that is detailed and displays an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of Detsicas's publications and archive notes. The villa developed from a poorly understood Period 1 structure into a long strip building with detached bath suite in the late first century (Period 2). In Period 3 (early second century) the strip building was augmented through the provision of a southern wing and substantially redeveloped baths. All of the spaces were linked and united by a porticus, fronted by an exceptional and large outdoor or garden pool. A smaller garden pool set in front of the large pool probably also dates to this phase. In Period 4 (late third or early fourth century) the baths were demolished and rebuilt once more and the main dwelling house underwent substantial modifications. Period 5 (the later fourth century) is dismissed as 'a period of decline' with occupation 'not at a sophisticated level' (p. 66). The baths went out of use but there was evidence of 'industrial activity', and a hypocaust furnace for one of the rooms in the main house contained two Theodosian coins.

Resources did not permit the publication of any artefactual reports. This means that assessing the chronology of the development of the structure, let alone the economy or status of its inhabitants, is impossible. There is a 'preliminary chart of coin loss' (fig 3.56), which shows coin loss from Claudius to the House of Theodosius, with an expected emphasis on the fourth century. The failure to use standard issue periods, or to present a summary catalogue, is a pity. There are many archaeologists and numismatists capable of producing such a catalogue at minimal effort and the failure to do so here is a lacuna. In many ways this is the point of the chapter: to spur further interest and targeted post-excavation analysis on particular groups and assemblages.

The second part of the volume is concerned with the Anglo-Saxon cemetery (Stoodley: ch. 4). Like the villa, the cemetery has been the subject of a number of published and unpublished interim studies and Stoodley has done us a great service by pulling much information about the burials together in one place. A catalogue of burials, supported by illustrations of grave goods and cemetery plans, is a helpful resource. Interestingly, the cemetery is essentially of Middle Saxon date, beginning in the seventh century and perhaps continuing, on radiocarbon evidence, to the ninth or tenth century. A number of individuals displayed weapon trauma and this may be related to periods of early medieval conflict.

The final section of the volume comprises chapters on place names in the Eccles region (Hawkins: ch. 6) and documentary evidence for the Medway Valley (Konshuh: ch. 7). The first of these contains a discussion of the tantalising Eccles place name (p. 205), arguably indicative of a late Roman Christian community

seemingly absent in the archaeological evidence from the villa. Chapter 7 gives a good discussion of the Medway's early medieval function as a border between East and West Kent. Neither of these chapters really belongs in this volume, but they do give some context to the cemetery.

The authors are to be congratulated in bringing some aspects of a complex site to publication. What follows, though? There is clearly an enormous archive of material from the villa site that would probably repay investigation. The same challenge that defeated Detsicas's post-excavation work remains: how can such analysis be resourced (p. 6)?

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