

Reviews

New Book Chronicle

Dan Lawrence

Every year the *Antiquity* office receives over 300 volumes for review, and we manage to get through nearly half. Of these, this year we have acquired seven that deal with one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world: the Roman city of Pompeii. If we take both samples as representative of wider trends, we must conclude that over two per cent of all published volumes in the discipline relate to this single site! While there are various biases involved that would argue against drawing such a conclusion, the numbers are striking. For this issue of NBC we will take a look at four of the seven volumes and see what there is still to learn about this wonderfully preserved site.

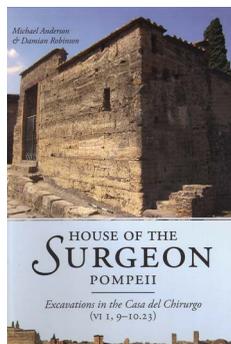
Picking apart Pompeii

MICHAEL A. ANDERSON & DAMIAN ROBINSON. 2018. *House of the Surgeon, Pompeii: excavations in the Casa del Chirurgo* (VI 1, 9–10.23). Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78570-728-5 £70.

ERIC E. POEHLER. 2017. *The traffic systems of Pompeii*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-061467-6 £55.

STEVEN J.R. ELLIS. 2018. *The Roman retail revolution. The socio-economic world of the taberna*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-876993-4 £65.

MIKO FLOHR & ANDREW WILSON (ed.). 2016. *The economy of Pompeii*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-878657-3 £95.

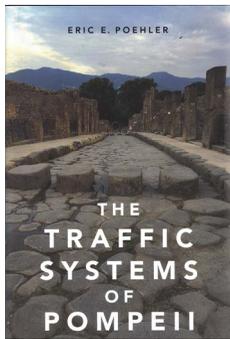


the project investigated a complete *insula* (city block), number VI 1, located just inside the Porto Ercolano

gate, which opens onto the main road to Herculaneum. This volume, intended as the first in a series of publications that will eventually tell the story of the entire *insula*, focuses on a single house, the eponymous House of the Surgeon (*Casa del Chirurgo*), named for the surgical instruments recovered when it was initially excavated. The house was discovered in 1770 by a team of workmen under the direction of Francesco la Vega, and the structure, as it stood at the time of the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, was revealed. As a result, the Bradford team were able to record the standing architecture as well as carry out sub-surface excavations, a relatively rare possibility at Pompeii where the incredible preservation of the last occupation layer means authorities are reluctant to sanction destructive archaeological work. The House of the Surgeon therefore provides “a window on the very forces of urban change in the city” (p. 16).

The volume is split into 14 chapters. Chapter 1 serves as a precursor to the series as a whole, introducing the main features of the *insula* and detailing the history of excavation and interest, dating back to the eighteenth century. Chapter 2 provides a thorough history of the AAPP itself, in which we learn of the debt owed to the British government minister David Mellor. In 1993, the soon-to-resign-in-disgrace Mellor wrote a typically impolite op-ed in *The Guardian* lamenting the state of Pompeii, prompting a response from the local authorities that resulted in the AAPP project. This chapter also details the scientific methods used, including the recovery of artefacts and ecofacts. Chapter 3 deals with the history of research on the House of the Surgeon itself, and particularly its role in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debates on the Roman atrium house-type, a form of elite residence that was considered key to the understanding of domestic space. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the stratigraphy of the house itself, firstly in summary (4) and then in a room-by-room treatment (5). This latter section runs for 300 pages and accounts for close to half of the volume. Maps and plans, as well as colour photographs, are used judiciously throughout. Chapters 6–13 are specialist reports on different aspects, including glass, coins, plaster, marble and mosaic remains, faunal and archaeobotanical data,

fuel use and environmental reconstruction. Some of these are more comprehensive than others, but all present new data in a clear and intelligible fashion. The concluding chapter summarises the main achievements of the project, including a date of initial construction (around 200 BC, or just after) and the identification of successive phases of rebuilding and modification up until AD 79. One might have wished for the specialist reports to have been better integrated here as the focus is rather architectural. Overall, however, this is an excellent report, containing a wealth of new data expertly marshalled, described and illustrated. A notable absence is a report on the pottery recovered, a result of the death of a key specialist involved in the analysis, but this will be rectified by later publications.

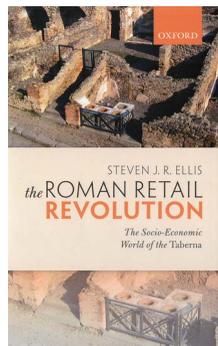


Our second volume examines interactions at a city-wide scale. *The traffic systems of Pompeii* (hereafter *TSP*) makes use of the exceptional preservation of material remains in the fabric of the AD 79 city to investigate the movement of vehicles around the city. Modern visitors to

Pompeii are often struck by the deep ruts worn into road surfaces by repeated movement of wheeled vehicles. Less well known are the more than 600 marks on vertical faces of street architecture, including curb stones, stepping stones and guard stones, which, importantly, can give us vital information on the direction of travel. Building on this evidence base, and bringing in further evidence from literary sources and other archaeological sites, Eric Poehler attempts to reconstruct the ways in which wheeled vehicles must have moved around the city. In such a large and complex network, however, movement required rules, and in articulating the relationship between daily practices, local government interventions and management, Poehler is also able to make statements about the role of central authorities in Roman urbanism.

After a brief introduction that sets out this relationship, Chapter 2 presents a concise but very useful overview of the growth of the Pompeian street system, a broadly north–south-orientated grid, the majority of which dates to the so-called masterplan, instituted around 300 BC. Chapters 3–5 deal with different aspects of the material remains, from street surface types to vertical

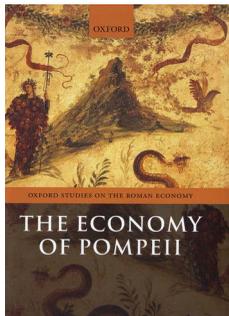
stones such as curbs, and the evidence for traffic left as marks. Chapter 6 brings this all together to address some of the rules of the system. Poehler is able to demonstrate the existence of two-way and one-way streets, and argues that the Pompeian drivers drove on the right, or, where possible, in the middle of the road. Some things do not change. Chapter 7 takes an innovative approach, using first-person narratives of three journeys by a fictional *mulio* (cart driver), Sabinus, followed by scholarly commentaries to elucidate what travelling around the city might actually have been like. I found this chapter extremely effective at conveying how the city might have functioned. Archaeological evidence for the material culture described in the short vignettes is cited through footnotes. This approach subtly allows the reader to distinguish between empiricism and fiction without disrupting the flow. Chapter 8 widens the lens to other Roman cities and allows for a more diachronic approach. Poehler shows how Roman cities often became victims of their own success, whereby increased traffic and the need for pavements resulted in restrictive road widths, and the need for systems of traffic management. The book draws out tensions between local and imperial government, especially in the first and second centuries AD when imperial edicts sought to regularise vehicle sizes and movements, and between any imposed rules and the realities of everyday life. The short conclusion provides a concise summary of the main arguments, and points out that there are still possibilities for future analysis of Pompeii's road systems. Any further work, however, will surely build on this thorough and readable account, which shows the value of detailed observation of seemingly quotidian remains at a large scale for investigating questions of economy, authority and practice.



This theme is also developed in *The Roman retail revolution*, in which Steven Ellis takes another aspect of urban life and uses it as a lens through which to investigate broader issues in Roman society. In this case, the focus is the world of the *taberna*, the shop, and especially those related to point-of-sale (i.e. to private consumers) transactions of food and drink. *Tabernae* were treated with disdain by contemporaneous authors such as Cicero and Seneca, seen as dens of gambling, prostitution and

drinking. This means historical interpretation must overcome significant biases, but Ellis argues that the analysis of archaeological remains of shops can generate more sophisticated studies of Roman social life. To do this, he draws on two major datasets. The first, and most germane here, is a 'retail landscape' of some 20 shops excavated by Ellis and his team in Pompeii. These are then compared with retail landscapes from a further collection of over 100 cities around the Mediterranean. The exceptional preservation at Pompeii allows for a level of detail in the analysis unavailable elsewhere, as evidenced by the fact that 62 per cent of all surviving counter-top shops in the Roman world were found at the site, but the comparative work means broader interpretations can be made.

For Ellis, the development of tabernae was not gradual or continuous, but proceeded through three spikes of activity: the revolution(s) alluded to in his title. These might be characterised as the initial construction, specialisation and finally homogenisation of retail outlets of this type. Large numbers of identifiable shops appear in Roman cities quite rapidly during the second century BC, often with workshop and retail shop combined. During the early Imperial period, another phase of urban expansion, these workshop-shop complexes were replaced by more specialised retail outlets, with the novel innovation of a bar or counter-top for displaying goods. Finally, during the second century AD, shops became much more standardised, occupying one or two rooms on the ground floors of large, multi-use complexes with residential accommodation on upper floors. Ellis connects these changes to developments in Roman urbanism, and especially the relationship between central control and market forces. Along the way, the book covers a wealth of other topics, from inequality to food habits amongst different social classes, showing how, as with traffic systems, a thorough examination of one facet of urban life can lead to insights into the entire social system.



The last volume in this section, *The economy of Pompeii* (hereafter *EoP*) stems from a conference held under the auspices of the Oxford Roman Economy Project. It aims to update our understanding of Pompeii's economy in the light of the new data

available from the swath of projects undertaken since the mid 1990s (of which the AAPP is a key example). Unsurprisingly, both Ellis and Poehler feature, as well as the editors and some of the contributors to *HotS*. The volume includes 14 chapters, divided into four sections buttressed by a short Introduction and shorter Conclusion.

The first section, 'City and hinterland', develops a theme perhaps neglected in the other three books reviewed, that of the relationship between Pompeii and its surrounding area. Ferdinando De Simone's chapter examines the entire Campania region, using settlement evidence and various other proxies to reconstruct land-use through time. He is able to show that all of the major cities relied both on their immediate hinterland and wider trade networks to satisfy their needs, while wine was produced in sufficient quantities to be exported. This is supported by Flohr's chapter on population and inequality, in which he argues, primarily on the basis of architectural evidence from the city itself, that the population of Pompeii was relatively wealthy even in the Roman world, and must have relied on external trade networks to support this high standard of living. This topic is taken up in the second section, 'Quality of life'. Here, three chapters use three different proxies to investigate living standards, and all come to similar conclusions. Statistical analysis of artefact types found in different households (Ray, Chapter 3), archaeobotanical remains from a sewer in Herculaneum (Rowan, Chapter 4) and a large-scale analysis of human skeletons (Lazer, Chapter 5) all suggest a rich and healthy population with access to a wide variety of foodstuffs and material culture. The third section is entitled 'Contextualizing economic life', and includes papers by Poehler and Robinson (of *TSP* and *HotS* fame respectively). Monteix's chapter (7) on production systems summarises a massive amount of data and a wide range of sources to make some interesting interpretations. He is especially strong on the limitations of the evidence, and warns against the recent preoccupation with quantification, which, in the absence of robust datasets, means it is impossible to "do more than just stack up fragile conjectures" (p. 235). The fourth section, 'Money and trade', features four chapters that make heavy use of coin evidence. Ellis provides an initial note of caution, showing how a close analysis of the context in which coins were recovered suggests only about 1 per cent can tell us anything about their everyday use; the other 99 per cent were associated with foundation deposits or simply waste. Another *HotS* alumnus,

© Antiquity Publications Ltd, 2018

Richard Hobbs, shows how the coins in insula VI were minted in several cities in the region, again demonstrating the high degree of economic integration. In an excellent chapter, Verboven weaves together textual sources and archaeological remains to argue that the monetary economy, while significant, was supplemented by a sophisticated system of credit, facilitating local trade. The volume ends with a conclusion by classicist Willem Jongman, whose 1988 book initiated interest in attempting to describe the Pompeian economy (Jongman 1988). For Jongman, future directions for the study of the Pompeian economy lie in the application of increasingly sophisticated archaeological science (although no specific techniques are named) and in the application of theoretical models developed for the early modern period. Overall, this is a volume rich in detail and rewarding in content. Perhaps the best compliment I can pay is that even after reading the three previous books, I still discovered new information in every chapter!

Taking all four volumes into account, what can we say about this most famous of sites? Firstly, it is clear that being unique is both a blessing and a curse. The extraordinary degree of preservation means that we can reconstruct aspects of the past which are simply invisible elsewhere. Scale is important here too—similar remains to Poehler’s wheel ruts or Ellis’s shops are found in other Roman cities, but as partially preserved fragments rather than entire systems. This relative abundance of detail, however, renders comparison with other sites difficult, begging the question of how unique Pompeii was in the Roman world even before the catastrophic events of August (or possibly October) AD 79. Further, as is made clear in the chapter on the history of the AAPP in *HotS*, exceptional preservation often precludes additional excavation, as there is an understandable reluctance to destroy pristine contexts. This means we still have a fairly poor understanding of the development of Pompeii through time, and especially its earliest phases. It is to be hoped that the rash of major excavation projects begun in the 1990s, which are now coming to publication, will rectify this. Finally, although it is not the aim of any of these books to look too far beyond Pompeii and its place in Roman society, I will finish with a plea for a broader set of comparisons to be made. How do the networks of movement, economic practices and hinterland relationships compare to ancient cities in other cultures across the world, some of which, such as Teotihuacan, Ur or Angkor Wat, have remains almost as well preserved? Perhaps comparing unique

sites from a wider pantheon might enable us to ask different sorts of questions. If such comparisons are to be made, it will be on the back of exemplary fieldwork publications such as the *HotS*, and the sorts of empirically grounded synthetic works available in the other three volumes discussed.

Reference

JONGMAN, W. 1988. *The economy and society of Pompeii*. Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben.

Books received

This list includes all books received between 1 July 2018 and 31 August 2018. Those featuring at the beginning of *New Book Chronicle* have, however, not been duplicated in this list. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its subsequent review in *Antiquity*.

European pre- and protohistory

JENS-HENRIK BECH, BERIT VALENTIN & ERIKSEN OG KRISTIAN KRISTIANSEN (ed.). *Bronze Age settlement and land-use in Thy, northwest Denmark, volumes 1 & 2* (Jysk Arkæologisk Selskabs Skrifter 102). 2018. Moesgård: Jutland Archaeological Society; 978-87-93423-22-0 500kr.

MARIA IVANOVA, BOGDAN ATHANASSOV, VANYA PETROVA, DESISLAVA TAKOROVA & PHILIPP W. STOCKHAMMER (ed.). *Social dimensions of food in the prehistoric Balkans*. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-080-0 £48.

APOSTOLOS SARRIS, EVITA KALOGIROPOULOU, TUNA KALAYCI & EVAGELIA KARIMALI (ed.). *Communities, landscapes, and interaction in Neolithic Greece* (International Monographs in Prehistory: Archaeological Series 20). 2017. New York: Berghahn; 978-1-879621-47-3 \$39.

Mediterranean archaeology

ROBERT McCABE. *Chronography*. 2017. Athens: Kapon; 978-618-5209-23-0 €49.50.

DIMITRIS PLANTZOS. *The art of painting in ancient Greece*. 2018. Athens: Kapon; 978-618-5209-20-9 €47.60.

MARGARITA SÁNCHEZ ROMERO & ROSA CID LÓPEZ. *Motherhood and infancies in the Mediterranean in*

antiquity. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-038-1 £40.

PANOS VALAVANIS. *Delphi and its museums*. 2018. Exeter: University of Exeter Press; 978-618-5209-29-2 £15.

The Roman world

MATTHEW SYMONDS. *Protecting the Roman Empire. Fortlets, frontiers, and the quest for post-conquest security*. 2018. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-108-42155-3 £75.

Anatolia, Levant, Middle East

SIGNE KRAG. *Funerary representations of Palmyrene women from the first century BC to the third century AD* (Studies in Classical Archaeology 3). 2018. Turnhout: Brepols; 978-2-503-56965-9 €100.

ACHIM LICHTENBERGER & RUBINA RAJA (ed.). *Middle Islamic Jerash (9th century–15th century). Archaeology and history of an Ayyubid-Mamluk settlement* (Jerash Papers 3). 2018. Turnhout: Brepols; 978-2-503-57812-5 €70.

OLIVIER P. NIEUWENHUYSE (ed.). *Relentlessly plain: seventh millennium ceramics at Tell Sabi Abyad, Syria*. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-084-8 £60.

Americas

JENNIFER BIRCH & VICTOR D. THOMPSON (ed.). *The archaeology of villages in eastern North America*. 2018. Gainesville: University of Florida Press; 978-1-68340-0046-2 \$80.

MEREDITH A.B. ELLIS. *The children of Spring Street. The bioarchaeology of childhood in a 19th century abolitionist congregation*. 2018. Cham: Springer; 978-3-319-92686-5 \$89.99.

BRAD H. KOLDEHOFF & TIMOTHY R. PAUKETAT (ed.). *Archaeology and ancient religion in the American midcontinent*. 2018. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press; 978-0-8173-1996-0 \$64.95.

CHARLES E. ORSER JR (ed.). *Archaeologies of the British in Latin America*. 2019. Cham: Springer; 978-3-319-95425-7 \$119.99.

YUMI PARK HUNTINGTON, DEAN E. ARNOLD & JOHANNA MINICH (ed.). *Ceramics of ancient America. Multidisciplinary approaches*. 2018.

Gainesville: University of Florida Press; 978-0-813056-606-7 \$110.

VERA TIESLER & ANDREW K. SCHERER (ed.). *Smoke, flames, and the human body in Mesoamerican ritual practice*. 2018. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks; 978-0-88-402426-2 \$75.

VERA TIESLER & MARÍA CECILIA LOZADA (ed.). *Social skins of the head. Body beliefs and ritual in ancient Mesoamerica and the Andes*. 2018. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; 978-0-8263-5963-6 \$85.

CATHY WILLERMET & ANDREA CUCINA (ed.). *Bioarchaeology of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica: an interdisciplinary approach*. 2018. Gainesville: University of Florida Press; 978-0-81305-600-5 \$90.

Britain and Ireland

ANDREW MANN & ROBIN JACKSON. *Clifton Quarry, Worcestershire: pits, posts and cereals: archaeological investigations 2006–2009*. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-011-4 £30.

KEITH RAY & JULIAN THOMAS. *Neolithic Britain. The transformation of social worlds*. 2018. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19882-389-6 £30.

HEATHER SEBIRE, PHILIP DE JERSEY & JASON MONAGHAN (ed.). *Roman Guernsey: excavations, fieldwork and maritime archaeology 1980–2015* (Guernsey Museum Monograph 9). 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-068-8 £40.

Byzantine, early medieval and medieval

PILAR DIARTE-BLASCO & NEIL CHRISTIE (ed.). *Interpreting transformations of people and landscapes in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: archaeological approaches and issues*. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-034-3 £55.

Historical archaeology

BIRGER STICHELBAUT (ed.). *Traces of war. The archaeology of the First World War*. 2018. Veurne: Hannibal; 978-94-9267-751-8 €29.50.

Oceania

RICHARD WALTER & PETER SHEPPARD. *Archaeology of the Solomon Islands*. 2018. Otago: Otago University Press; 978-0-947522-53-7 \$50.

Heritage, conservation and museums

DOUGLAS C. COMER & ANNEMARIE WILLEMS (ed.). *Feasible management of archaeological heritage sites open to tourism*. 2018. Cham: Springer; 978-3-319-92755-8 €103.99.

Other

DOUG BAILEY. *Breaking the surface. An art/archaeology of prehistoric architecture*. 2018. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-190-61187-3 £25.49.

NICOLE BOIVIN & MICHAEL D. FRACHETTI (ed.). *Globalization in prehistory. Contact, exchange, and the 'people without history'*. 2018. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-10857-327-6 £90.

SALLY CRAWFORD, DAWN M. HADLEY & GILLIAN SHEPHERD (ed.). *The Oxford handbook of the archaeology of childhood*. 2018. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-967069-7 £110.

DRAGOȘ GHEORGHIU, GEORGE NASH, HERMAN BENDER & EMILIA PASZTOR (ed.). *Lands of the shamans: archaeology, cosmology and landscape*. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78570-954-8 £38.

BRIAN HAYDEN. *The power of ritual in prehistory. Secret societies and the origins of social complexity*. 2018. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-10-857207-1 £90.

IAN HODDER. *Where are we heading? The evolution of humans and things*. 2018. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press; 978-0-30020-409-4 \$27.50.

NIKOS PANOU & HESTER SCHADEE (ed.). *Evil lords. Theories and representations of tyranny from antiquity to the Renaissance*. 2018. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-939485-2 £47.99.

KRISH SEETAH. *Humans, animals, and the craft of slaughter in archaeo-historic societies*. 2018. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-11084-288-0-4 £75.