Hingley's *Londinium: a biography* represents a major contribution to the archaeological study of Roman London, which is one of the most extensively and intensively excavated cities in the Roman world. This book has long been needed, but, at the same time, it benefits enormously from the results of work published recently. The book presents a successful selection of structural, burial, and epigraphic evidence that serves to illustrate a chronological narrative of the development of Londinium.

Hingley continues the tradition begun by Wheeler's survey of evidence from Roman London (1928), attempted by many (e.g. Harrison 1971, Home 1948, Marsden 1980, Morris 1982, Roach Smith 1859), but most successfully by the incomparable Ralph Merrifield (1965; also 1969, 1975, and 1983). *Londinium: a biography* represents a significant update to Merrifield's 1951 *Roman London*, the last work of synthesis that made an original attempt to present the city's structural development over four centuries. Merrifield's book was published on the cusp of major changes in British archaeology as a result of the 27 years between these two books saw the discovery and publication of some of the largest and most systematically excavated Roman sites in London. Indeed, nearly half of the sites that Hingley discusses were not yet excavated when Merrifield was writing.

*Londinium: a biography* makes no claims to be a compilation of data; tackling such an undertaking would be a daunting task. The London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) records more than 1,500 archaeological watching briefs, evaluations, and excavations within the City of London and Southwark with evidence dating to the Roman period, while this book surveys approximately 200 interventions, according to the appendix (pgs 249–257). Hingley has made the pragmatic decision to focus on structural evidence from excavations that have been published or for which there is at least some information in the public domain, including within other works of interpretation (e.g. Cowan et al. 2009 and Wallace 2014) as well as in short, interim descriptions (e.g. the 'Roman Britain in' sections of *Britannia* and the magazine *London Archaeologist*). In this, it fits well with some close cousins in Oxbow's Urban Archaeological Series, e.g. Niblett and Thompson's Late Pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA) and Roman Verulamium sections in *Albin's Buried Town* (2005) and chapters 4–7 of Gascoyne and Radford's *Colchester: Fortress of the War God* (2013).

Hingley provides a chronological presentation of the main highlights of the town's structural development, with ample summary and description supported by greyscale illustrations throughout. This is, however, a book for those already familiar with the archaeology and events of LPRIA and Roman-period Britain as few words are spared for scene-setting, explanation, or comparison (although the endnotes, pgs. 258–336, are good value here). Similarly, readers will need to look elsewhere for the history of archaeology in the city and to familiarize themselves with the topography of London. With those relatively minor provisos, the structure of the chapters has a regular rhythm, most beginning with 'people and status' sections that draw on writing tablets and stone inscriptions, expanding to structures and occupation in the different parts of the town, discussing the boundaries and burial areas, and concluding with a summary. This structure allows the reader to flip back and forth and the chapters are sufficiently independent to allow for such use.

Chronological themes are put centre stage. Hingley begins by exploring the significance of the Iron Age ritual deposition in the Thames, which is separated from the earliest urban evidence by at least a few generations, and he suggests potential continuities through the gap in settlement, especially with respect to water and watery deposition (Ch. 1). In the second chapter, he examines the nature of the town's foundation and earliest growth from the late 40s AD to c. AD 60/1, arguing for a middle-road through the lively debates of military vs. civilian or mercantile forces (Ch. 2). In a short review of the AD 60/1 Boucicaut-Revolte fire (Ch. 3) and recovery (Ch. 4), Hingley draws attention to the closely dated evidence for rebuilding in the early AD 60s, including the temporary military occupation at the Placentia Plantation fort, but leaves aside analysis of much of the wealth of material from the fire deposits themselves. Chapter 5 demonstrates the changing urban character during Flavian expansion and monumentalization, including the change from timber to stone buildings; evidence for possible significance and presence of the imperial administration is evaluated in the light of new discoveries. Chapter 6 is four pages of text that explores the evidence for one or more fires (the so-called Hadrianic fires?), which both destroyed and preserved the city in the 120s/30s AD; a major opportunity was missed to digitize and combine excavation plans to create a near-contemporaneous map of the urban form c. AD 120/130. Chapter 7 is the longest of the chapters, which charges through descriptions of a huge body of structural and burial evidence that characterize the height of expansion and occupation in Londinium. The overwhelming number of buildings to describe does, however, seem to overshadow Hingley's important discussions of identity, gender, and power. Chapters 8 and 9 present the third- and fourth-century city, including public, religious, and monumental construction. Here, Hingley discusses the function of the different episodes of city-wall construction, debates about population numbers and the prevalence of large stone buildings, the introduction of intramural burial, the abandonment of the waterfront, and the 'dark earth' deposits, and the late/sub-Roman abandonment (Ch. 9). While individual plans of every site would be impossible to include, the book could have been enhanced by phased maps combining structural evidence from several sites into one image (i.e. illustrating more structures and features than simply the roads, city wall, and site outlines shown), the creation and analysis of which may have even aided Hingley's interpretations.

While the organization of the book is strictly chronological, Hingley has selected a number of themes to direct and structure the text, predominantly ritual and mortuary rites, but also touching on ethnicity, migration, and the nature of Romano-British urbanism. He particularly highlights his interest in landscapes and waterscapes and includes discussion of the Walbrook skills, the relationship between water and burial/ritual, and the significance of the streams. Building on this watery focus, further work could be done to address how movement on water affected experience and the communication of civic identity. This would be worthwhile given the significance of the changing nature of movement along the Thames, how people arrived, and what they saw (e.g. port structures, the bridge, the waterfront temples, the riverside wall, and so forth) to 'being' in Roman London.

Outside of these themes, which comprise a relatively small portion of the text, there is a tendency to description and summary, perhaps unavoidable given the breadth and scale of the study. Having set up the book with an argument that continuity from pre-Roman practices shaped the town (Ch. 1), this develops only into a peripheral theme related to water and burial scattered in later chapters. Similarly, Hingley deals robustly with the details of the arguments surrounding the nature of the foundation in Ch. 2, but seems to lose a bit of steam for further enthusiastic critical engagement. Readers unfamiliar with the debates may be disappointed by the undermining of other aspects of analysis, including eating and drinking, the activities and occupations of the population, the body/dress/adornment, literacy and writing equipment, construction materials and techniques, gender, and civic and group identities, for example.

These observations do not detract from what was clearly a monumental undertaking. This book will surely become the starting point for anyone studying Roman London as well as a handy reference for those with a research interest in Romano-British urbanism.

References


This major new work on Roman London brings together the many new discoveries of the last generation and provides a detailed overview of the city from before its foundation in the first century to the fifth century AD. Richard Hingley explores the archaeological and historical evidence for London under the Romans, assessing the city in the context of its province and the wider empire. He explores the multiple functions of Londinium over time, considering economy, industry, trade, status and urban infrastructure, but also looking at how power, status, gender and identity are reflected through the material culture of the time.