

An Imperial Possession – Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC – AD 409

by David Mattingly.

Penguin Allen Lane 2006.

As might be imagined for a book that covers nearly four hundred years, An Imperial Possession is literally a weighty tome; that it is by no means a heavy read is testimony to Professor David Mattingly's enthusiasm for his subject, and his facility as a writer.

For those whose knowledge of Roman Britain is restricted to scraps concerning Caesar's invasion, the campaigns of the Flavian-appointed governor Marcus Agricola, the revolt of Boudica, and a visit to a Roman ruin, the story that unfolds in An Imperial Possession is a surprising one.

Thanks to recent archaeological discoveries and fresh research, Professor Mattingly presents a rich and varied picture of Roman life in Britain, and the interaction between Romans and natives.

The book is divided into five parts, Introduction, the Military Community, The Civil Communities, The Rural Communities, and Comparative Perspectives and Concluding Thoughts. Material from these different sections builds into as complete a portrait of Roman Britain as one could wish to find.

An Imperial Possession is the perfect rejoinder to anyone who would misguidedly claim that ancient history is boring.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh