Stephen Hill and Stanley Ireland, both well known to students of Roman Britain, have produced another volume in the BCP's Classical World Series. It has all the virtues of companion volumes in the series and should find a ready market among those wanting the bare bones of the subject, either as a concise, accurate and up-to-date introduction or as a tool with which to pass exams. It should be emphasized that the book has no pretensions beyond such an audience.

There are eight chapters. The first three set the historical background: 1. Introduction (1-6); 2. Britain before the Romans (7-12); 3. Historical Outline (13-34). The next five treat various aspects of life in the province: 4. Soldiers, Forts and Frontiers (35-62); 5. Administration (63-68); 6. Towns and Countryside (69-93); 7. Religion (94-103); 8. Art (104-113). The maintenance of Roman control and the process of cultural fusion emerge as major themes. There are suggestions for further study (114) and suggestions for further reading (115). Illustrations come in the form of line drawings, of which there are twenty-two, including a map (xi), along with two tables relating to military organisation (36, 39). It is a shame, though understandable from the point of view of cost, that the chapter on art, which concentrates upon sculpture, was one of those illustrated by drawings (Figs. 17-22). No index is supplied, evidently in the belief that it would be superfluous to a book so compact.

The positive features of the book are many. It has answers for the basic question, 'What is the point of studying Roman Britain?' (1), and there is a section devoted to defining the subject. 'Roman Britain' is 'Britain during the period of Roman influence and domination, that is to say from the first century BC through to the early fifth century AD' (2). The various chapters provide brief,
standard treatments which manage to incorporate references to
the ancient literary sources and to such tantalising tidbits as the
very recent discovery north of Dublin of a Roman-style fort
containing coins from the reigns of Titus to Hadrian (AD 79-138).
The authors' only comment is that,

'This was probably a defended port of entry for trade
between Rome and the Irish which also served a political
function, maintaining friendly relations with tribes and
ensuring that such relations remained friendly' (25).

As the editorial blurb on the back page tells us, 'The aim of
the book is not simply to supply information, but to invite the
reader to ask questions and delve deeper into Rome's most
northerly province'. Mention of the Irish fort is presumably an
example of this. It shows the authors' command of their field but
also the limitations of their approach. The book is designed,
again according to the back page, 'for students and teachers of
Classical Civilization and Ancient History at school, college and
university'. My feeling is that it is pitched somewhere around
the middle of that group rather than at its upper levels.
University students should very quickly require a more substantial
work, complete with colour illustrations and more detailed maps.
This is not, of course, to say that they would not continue to be
indebted to the introduction gained from this more succinct, and far
cheaper, book.

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